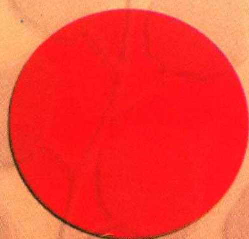
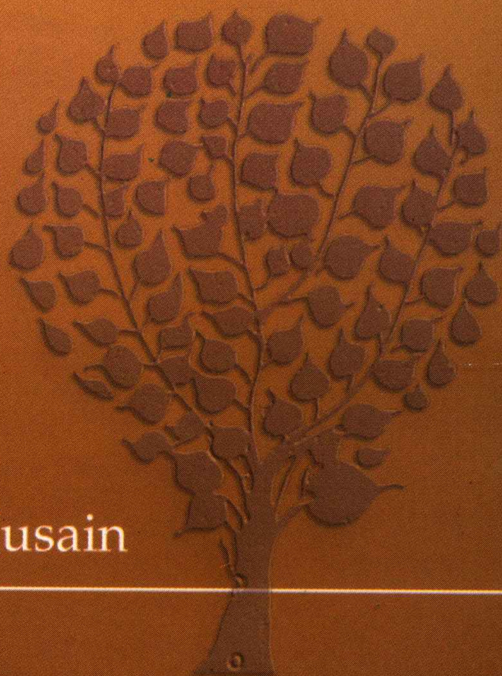


The National Culture of India



S. Abid Husain

THE NATIONAL CULTURE OF INDIA

India—the Land and the People

The National Culture of India

S. ABID HUSAIN





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To
the memory of
SAIYIDAIN and AZIZ

Contents

Foreword

In this book *The National Culture of India* Dr S.Abid Husain indicates the central characteristics of Indian culture as it has grown from its beginnings to its present positions. His presentation of the subject is marked by ability, vision and purpose. He argues that there has been a common spiritual outlook on life, to which various races and religions have made contributions. "India's cultural history of several thousand years shows that the subtle but strong thread of unity which runs through the infinite multiplicity of her life, was not woven by stress or pressure of power groups but the vision of seers, the vigil of saints, the speculation of philosophers, and the imagination of poets and artists and that these are the only means which can be used to make this national unity wider, stronger and more lasting." It may appear somewhat strange that our government should be a secular one while our culture is rooted in spiritual values. Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on the universality of spiritual values which may be attained by a variety of ways.

Religion is a transforming experience. It is not a theory of God. It is spiritual consciousness. Belief and conduct, rites and ceremonies, dogmas and authorities are subordinate to

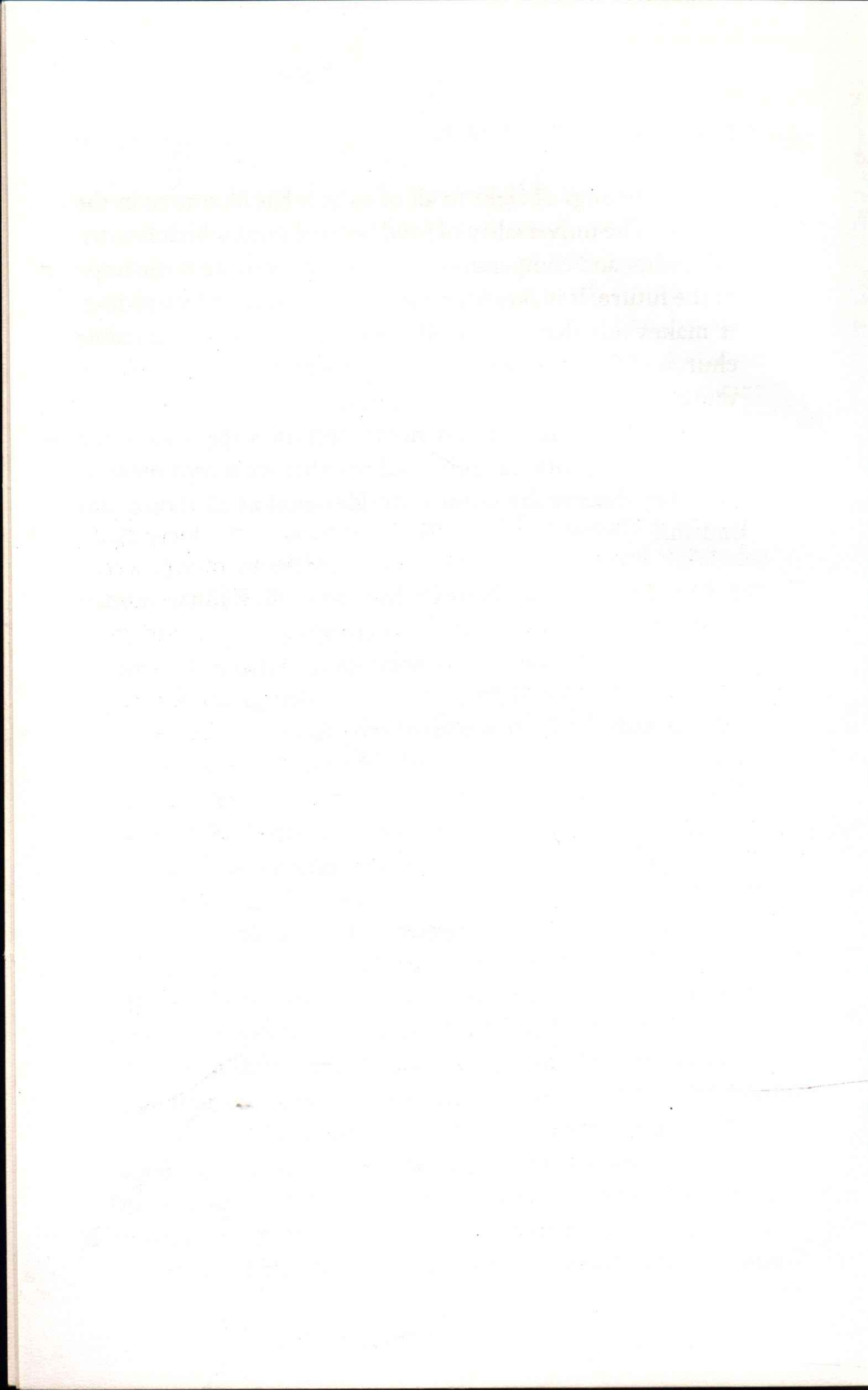
the art of self discovery and contact with the Divine. When the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events, gathers himself together inwardly, strives with concentration, there breaks upon him an experience, sacred, strange, wondrous, which quickens within him, lays hold of him, becomes his very being. Even those who are the children of science and reason, must submit to the fact of spiritual experience which is primary and positive. We may dispute theologies but we cannot deny facts. The fire of life in its visible burnings compels assent, though not the fumbling speculations of smokers sitting around the fire. While realization is a fact, the theory of reality is an inference. There is a difference between contact with reality and opinion about it, between the mystery of godliness and belief in God. This is the meaning of a secular conception of the state though it is not generally understood.

This view is in consonance with the Indian tradition. The seer of the Rig Veda affirms that the real is one while the learned speak of it variously. Asoka in Rock Edict XII proclaims: "One who reverences one's own religion and disparages that of another from devotion to one's own religion and to glorify it over all other religions, does injure one's own religion most certainly. It is verily, concord of religions that is meritorious." *Samavaya eva sadhuh.* Centuries later Akbar affirms: "The various religious communities are divine treasures entrusted to us by God. We must love them as such. It should be our firm faith that every religion is blessed by Him. The Eternal King showers His favours on all men without distinction." This very principle is incorporated in our Constitution which gives full freedom to all to profess and practice their religious beliefs and rites so long as they are not repugnant to our ethical sense. We recognize the common ground on which different religious traditions rest. This common

ground belongs of right to all of us as it has its source in the eternal. The universality of fundamental ideas which historical studies and comparative religion demonstrate is the hope of the future. It makes for religious unity and understanding. It makes out that we are all members of the one invisible church of God though historically we may belong to this or that particular religious community.

Dr Abid Husain has made certain suggestions for strengthening national unity and whether we accept them or not, they deserve the serious consideration of all thoughtful Indians.

2, King Edward Road, New Delhi **S. Radhakrishnan**
20 April 1955



Preface

In the second half of the eighteenth century the emergence of the United States of America as a free democratic power, which served as an indirect cause of the French Revolution, was an epoch-making event. It deepened and broadened the trickling stream of modern democracy into a mighty perennial river. Today when the sources of the democratic impulse seem to be drying up in many parts of the world, the birth of the new Republic of India is a momentous event which brings a new message of hope to all lovers of freedom. But this hope is not free from a lurking fear that the introduction of democracy may prove to be premature in India as it has been in some other Asian countries.

There are three main reasons for the failure of democracy to take firm roots in various countries of Asia. In some, national disposition and historical tradition combined to create an unfavourable climate; in others, the people lacked the minimum education and political consciousness and in the case of one or two countries anti-democratic forces from outside exercised a retarding influence. Luckily in India none of these obstacles is so great as to be a real danger to the democratic experiment. The idea of democracy is not new to the Indian mind. Though ancient India did not know anything like the present elaborate system of representative govern-

ment, there was a primitive democracy on the village level. The people, innocent of book-learning, most of them are, do not lake the practical good sense and the native public spirit which form the basis of democracy. This was amply proved during the first General Elections in free India—the biggest in the history of mankind. As for external influences, they are on the whole favourable to democracy. The only danger to our new democracy, and much greater than it would appear to the superficial observer is that Indian nationhood and national culture is a delicately balanced system of unity in diversity and if this balance is disturbed by a wrong handling of the cultural problem, there may be a terrible disintegration, putting an end not only to the democratic system but to all peace and order and our hard won freedom may be lost to forces of tyranny, external or internal.

The purpose of this book is to discuss this vital problem as far as possible, from an objective point of view, to study the past development and present position of Indian nationhood and national culture and to consider the ways and means of preserving and strengthening their integrity.

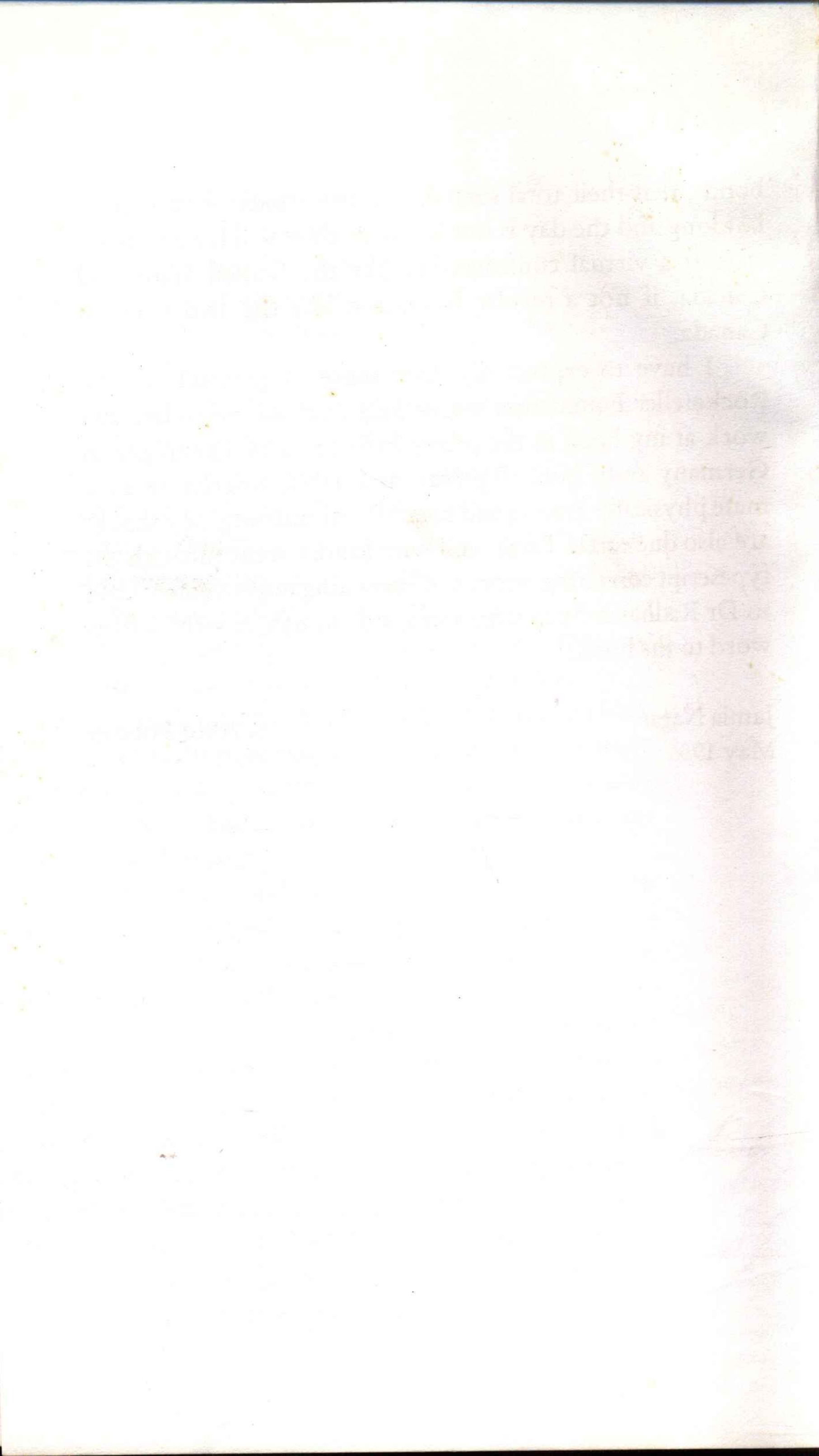
It must be mentioned here that when this book was first written in Urdu, India had not yet been split into two separate sovereign states and my scope of discussion comprehended the whole of undivided India. The partition of the country due mainly to the forces of culture separatism, has in the first place, proved that the dangers pointed out by me were real and in the second place made it necessary to confine the discussion generally to India proper (Bharat) which is the major heir to the cultural heritage of undivided India. But I must emphasise that I regard the whole subcontinent as one cultural unit (in the broader sense of the term) whose two parts are so closely bound to each other, not merely by common history and geography, but by a thousand inner

bonds, that their total severance in the present form cannot last long and the day is not far when they will have to form at least a virtual confederation like the United States and Canada, if not a regular federation like the two parts of Canada.

I have to express my deep sense of gratitude to the Rockefeller Foundation whose help enabled me to live and work at my book in the pretty little town of Tuebingen in Germany away from all private and public worries, in a climate physically bracing and mentally stimulating. My thanks are also due to Dr Tarachand who kindly went through the typescript correcting errors and suggesting improvements and to Dr Radhakrishnan who was good enough to write a foreword to the book.

Jamia Nagar
May 1956

S. Abid Husain



Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of this book was an abridgment of the original Urdu work in three volumes published in 1946. Most of the chapters were cut short and the whole compressed into much less than half of its former volume.

But it was found that the chapter dealing with the ancient period was too brief in proportion to those in which the medieval and modern periods were discussed. So in revising the book for the second edition, I have expanded chapter two of the second edition into six chapters (chapters two to seven). Besides, the last chapter has been completely recast so as to take a more comprehensive view of the problems we have to solve before a new cultural synthesis, which is necessary to ensure our national unity and freedom, can be achieved.

S.Abid Husain

Preface to the Third Edition

For this edition which is being published by the National Book Trust, India I have thoroughly revised the previous edition and brought it up-to-date in respect of facts as well as some of my ideas which have changed as a result of my close observation of what has happened in the political, social and educational fields during the last twenty years.

S. Abid Husain

Introduction

I

The most tedious task in scientific discussion is definition—specially of abstract terms. The finding of a general concept which can comprehend an infinite number of particular objects is beyond most people who have not been favoured with more than their fair share of pure reason. Ancient Athenians could not suffer Socrates because he forced everybody to define abstract terms like justice, temperance, love, etc., and exasperated them by pulling to pieces every definition that they attempted. But unfortunately in dealing with scientific problems one cannot do without definitions. If you and I start an argument, as happens very often, without a precise notion of what we are talking about, we are apt to involve ourselves in ridiculous contradictions like the victims of Socrates' sense of humour. So it is just as well that before we begin our discussion we try to have a fairly clear idea of the import of at least those words, 'nation' and 'culture', around which this book revolves.

First let us see that meaning people generally attach to the word 'culture'. The sense in which the term is most frequently used, is good taste and refined manners. But it is also used for material embodiments of good taste and refinement.

So we often refer to the buildings, gardens and paintings of the Mughal period as relics of the Mughal culture. Again, collective institutions, codes and systems are also known as cultural objects. So the political and educational system of the Greeks and the legal code of the Romans are often regarded among the most important aspects of their respective cultures. And lastly, the term culture has sometimes a still more general and abstract connotation—a system of ultimate ends or norms of life. When people make the disputable assertion that Eastern culture is more spiritual than Western they use the word in this most general and abstract sense. We will find that all these things represent the various aspects and modes of existence of one and the same complex.

Here the phrase 'modes of existence' requires some explanation. Two modes of existence, physical and mental, are familiar to all of us. My body, which is something tangible, which I myself and other people can apprehend through the external senses, has a physical existence. My thoughts and feelings, which are directly perceptible to me alone, have a mental existence. But philosophers point out other modes of existence of which we are not ordinarily conscious. Those ideas, beliefs, principles, which are not confined to a single individual but are shared by many, those collective institutions which are handed down from generation to generation as religion, morality, law, art, state, cannot be said to have a subjective or transitory existence but should be credited with a more permanent objective entity which could be called *objective mental existence*. A fourth mode of *ideal existence* could be ascribed to those norms or standards of perfection, those ultimate moral values, by which we judge every object, action, every principle of life—been life itself. The fifth and highest mode is that of absolute existence which religion knows as God. Of these the one which interests us here as

bearing upon the definition of culture, is ideal existence which we will examine a little more closely.

The point in which metaphysical theories differ from one another is the concept of existence. To some philosophers, matter, to others an immaterial substance which they call spirit or mind, is the only fundamental entity which manifests itself in the multiplicity of objects which we call the world. But almost all of them have to make some distinction among the levels of existence named above though they may not recognize them as separate modes. So the conception, in some form or another, of values which are not transient and subjective but have a certain permanence like objective beings is so common among philosophers that we may safely call it universal. There is, no doubt, much difference about the real nature, the number and the order of such ultimate moral values but that is not relevant to our purpose. What we are concerned with is that all thinking people recognize some sort of ultimate standards or norms. All agree that one or the other of them is always the end of every moral action and the basis of every moral judgment.

Now, if we look back on the four meanings of the word 'culture' mentioned in the foregoing pages, we will find that the concept of culture is very closely related to that of ultimate values. The most general terms in which culture could be explained would be something like this: "The sense of ultimate values which a certain society has and according to which it wants to shape its life."

This initial explanation given above refers to the ideal aspect of culture. Now the collective complexes (state, society, art, science) which are permanent results of the attempt to create ultimate values could be regarded as its *objective mental* aspect, the qualities and attitudes of individuals inspired by these values as its *subjective aspect*, and the physical

objects in which these values are embodied, e.g. buildings, pictures, etc., would be its *material aspect*.

After the preliminary discussion, it is comparatively easy for us to give a definition of culture. We can now say "culture is a sense of ultimate values possessed by a particular society as expressed in its collective institutions, by its individual members in their dispositions, feelings, attitudes and manners as well as in significant forms which they give to material objects." This definition may not stand the cross-examination of a Socrates but it has given us a comprehensive concept including all shades of meaning in which the world 'culture' is used. In order to make the idea clearer we will try to distinguish it from two allied concepts—religion and civilization.

Religion in its wider sense coincides with, and goes beyond, culture and in its narrower sense, forms an important part of it. Where religion signifies the inner experience which reveals to the mind the real meaning and purpose of life, it is the very soul of culture; but where it is used for the external form in which the inner experience has crystallized itself, it is only a part of it. Religion as the inner realization of the highest truth can never be opposed to culture; but positive religion, when it has degenerated into mere form without substance, is often in conflict with cultural life.

Civilisation is sometimes used as just another word for culture but generally in the sense of a higher order of culture. As a matter of fact, civilization is that stage in the cultural development of a people when they begin to live in large habitations called cities, which represent a higher level of material life or a higher standard of living. But a higher standard of material life has a cultural content only when it is imbued with, or serves as a means of attaining some ultimate moral value. When such life is in conflict with one of the moral values, or even when it is devoid of any such values, it

will prove to be an obstacle to cultural progress. So civilization is not always an ally but sometimes an enemy of culture. History shows us many instances in which an old degenerate civilisation had to be weeded out so that true culture could thrive anew.

II

Culture resides in a group of human beings called society. If a certain society has or wants to have political as well as cultural unity, it is called a nation. We have now to get a more precise idea of what a nation means.

Nationhood as a political concept is not quite new; but it has acquired a new significance in modern Europe. Formerly the state was regarded, along with religion, race and culture, as one of the forces which brought and held people together. But when the influence of religion over the minds of the people declined in Europe and the Church ceased to be the binding force which it had been, the state grew to be the real unifying factor and the sense of nationhood, i.e. of being the citizens of the same state, became the most powerful bond of unity.

The general idea of a nation is a group of men living under the same political order in the same state. But it is not an adequate definition. If different groups of people are living in the same state by a historical accident or under compulsion we are not justified in calling them a nation. As a matter of fact, the *acceptance* by people in some form or another of a certain political order is the very basis of the modern concept of nationhood. So we have to define a nation as a group of people living of *their own free will* or striving to live under the same political order in the same state. This definition covers the two essential conditions of nationhood.

All other characteristics which we can observe in the existing nations are preconditions paving the way for the formation of a nation.

These preconditions for an ideal nation are: domicile in a compact geographical area, unity of race, religion, language and general culture, and a common history. Obviously if a group of men has all these things it can very easily form itself into a nation and its nationhood would be most strong and enduring. But nowhere in the world, not even in the West where the present idea of nationhood was born and fostered, does there exist a nation which fulfils all these conditions. Let us take first the racial element. All anthropologists agree that there has been such a mixing of racial stock in most parts of the world, perhaps more so in the West, that the claim of any nation that all or most of its members belong to a single pure stock is a myth. It is the same with religion. Except for some minor nations which enjoy a certain degree of religious unity, we see that every nation is a conglomeration of different confessions and faiths, and of those who have no faith or confession at all. Only geographical, cultural and linguistic unity and a common history are the characteristics found in most nations. But there are countries like Switzerland and Canada which have more than one national language. There is the USA where people of different races and cultures, without any common history, were welded together simply by living in the same area and speaking the same language. So if we study the circumstances under which nations were actually formed we could, at the most, say that geographical unity and the unity of the general cultural life are necessary preconditions of nationhood. Unity of race, religion, and language or a common history, though most important, are not indispensable.

The conclusion to which this discussion leads us is this:

people living in a compact geographical area, with a general cultural unity, have a minimum requisite for nationhood and can become a nation by accepting a particular political order and forming a state. Now the more additional factors these people have in common—language, race, religion, history—the stronger would the bond of nationhood prove to be. In most cases, these additional factors automatically develop by political association over a long period. For instance, when the American nation came into being it had no common history but now after three and a half centuries of sharing one another's weal and woe the Americans have a common history which binds them together almost as closely as that of the oldest European nations. Similarly the unity of language in Great Britain and France did not exist at the birth of these nations but developed in due course. Sometimes attempts are made to produce these common factors by force, e.g. rulers of European countries, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tried to impose uniformity of religious belief among their subjects. But such attempts seldom succeed and generally lead to disastrous consequences.

III

Now let us look at the India of today and see which conditions for the formation of a nation mentioned in the foregoing pages exist here, and which can be evolved in course of time.

The first essential condition, geographical unity, is found in India to a degree which very few national states can boast of. A glance at the map will show that impassable mountains in the north, open sea of the south, south-east and south-west, form the most sharply defined natural boundaries one could imagine. To the north-east and north-west beyond the frontiers artificially created between the parts of the

sub-continent called India and Pakistan, there are natural barriers no less well-defined. So it seems that nature designed this entire region to be a perfect illustration of the geographical term 'country'. Moreover, undivided India was a self-sufficient economic unit and even after division the residuary state of Bharat (India) has all the natural resources necessary for a balanced economy if they can only be properly developed.

Where geographical and economic unity exist to such an extent, one would naturally expect to find some sort of cultural unity because physical and economic factors are effective, though not exclusive, influences in shaping cultural life. Indeed, when we look at the cultural history of India, we find that in spite of the multifarious differences, there is basic unity in the thinking, feeling and living of Indians which waxes and wanes with the changing political constellation but never ceases. Several times have the forces of disintegration, external and internal, threatened to shatter this unity but India's spirit of oneness has always reasserted itself and has blended opposing tendencies and movements into a new harmonious culture. Today when we are passing through a period of some cultural confusion, this spirit of unity persists under the surface of particularism which seems to be rife in the country. It has only to be brought out and developed by arbitrary methods, but according to its own inner laws. The most potent factor of cultural unity, the national language seems to have turned into a dividing force. But, as we will see in the last chapter, if the linguistic problem which is the core of the whole cultural problem in India, is handled with understanding and imagination, the urge for cultural unity which is in our very blood, will overcome all separatist tendencies and strengthen the foundations of political unity.

A common history is another strong force which binds

the people of India together. Most of the people who came to India from other countries have been living side by side with the original inhabitants for thousands of years. Even the last of the series, the Muslims from the north-western countries, have been here for eight to twelve centuries; though the story of their life might have been different from that of the rest in the beginning, for the last 200 years before independence their lot had been the same as that of the rest, i.e. they had passed through the same political and economic bondage and exploitation, by the same foreign power.

After surveying the various unifying factors, we should look at those which are regarded as forces of division favouring separatist tendencies in our country—race and religion.

In the early stages of the evolution of human society race played a very important part as the basis of social and cultural unity. But as emigrations, conquests and colonisations led to such a mixing of the various races that it was not easy to distinguish them from one another and, as the human mind advanced from brute existence to civilized life, where community of moral values is stronger than that of flesh and blood, race lost much of its importance. But still during periods of cultural degeneration, when the faith of the people in moral values is shaken, they relapse into the worship of the idol of race and a state of society bordering on tribal life. India was passing through such a period before the national movement heralded a new age. The ramifications of the caste system, much more rigid and complicated than the simple *varnashram* of the ancient period, was dominating the whole social and cultural life. Even the Muslims, whose religion was essentially a crusade against the race-worship of the pre-Islam Arabs, had on the whole degenerated into a sort of 'tribalism'. It showed itself at its worst at the time of elections for the local and higher legislative bodies. Whether

it was a question of Chaturvedi or Srivastava, Ghosh or Bose, Iyer or Ayyangar, Qureishi or Ansari, 'tribal' loyalty was the moving force. Class, party, nation, country and in some cases, even religion, counted for nothing. To a considerable extent this sectional loyalty still persists but it is now fighting a gradually losing battle against larger loyalties to community (religious and linguistic), party and nation.

Along with race, religion also had a bad name as a dividing force. To the conflict between the two largest communities in India, the Hindus and the Muslims, is ascribed the division of India. But an unbiased study of contemporary history will show that it was not religious feeling itself but extraneous elements which had become associated with religion; vested interests which used the name of religion for their own purpose, started the separatist movement culminating in the partition of the country. As far as pure religion is concerned, there is fundamental harmony in the inner spiritual experience of Hindus and Muslims. No doubt on the level of positive religion—dogma, ritual, religious law—there are considerable differences which could lead to perpetual conflict. But the heart of India which supplies life-blood to Muslims as well as Hindus has been so nurtured on the breadth of mind and vision of mystical traditions, that religious antagonism leading to war, which was a common phenomenon in Europe in the Middle Ages, was rare in Indian history. Even in the last thousand years when two religions so entirely different as Hinduism and Islam, were brought together on the soil of India, her Saints and Sufis created an atmosphere of not mere toleration but of harmony, so that while Hindu and Muslim princes were struggling for power, the common people of both religions could live amicably together. This atmosphere of religious harmony continued more or less to the end of the last century. It was only in the beginning of

the present century that motives and interests which were not even remotely connected with religion used the magic of its name to set the common man—Hindu and Muslim—against each other and started the series of riots leading to the vivisection (for that is the only proper word to describe the cutting up of a living organism) of India.

That these clashes did not occur spontaneously on account of religious differences but were engineered by interested parties from non-religious motives, becomes clear when we see that they started during a period of political unrest and economic stress, became particularly violent at each municipal or parliamentary election and were led by those who had closer relations with the British Empire than with the Kingdom of Heaven.

To sum up the foregoing discussion, three preconditions of nationhood—geographical and economic unity and a common history exist in India to a higher degree than in many countries of the world; in the cultural field there is, under the surface of local and communal variety, a deep basic unity. On the other hand, the spirit of 'tribalism' linguistic parochialism, and so-called religious communalism are acting as dividing forces.

After a careful survey of all the relevant circumstances one comes to the conclusion that the type of all-embracing nationhood which binds together the constituent groups and individuals, not only through bonds of loyalty of the same state, but through those of uniformity in all departments of life, can never grow on Indian soil. The various cultural and religious groups which form the India nation, have within the general sphere of a common outlook on life, their special spheres of living and thinking which they are not prepared to give up at any price. The philosophy of life which gives priority to political values over religious and cultural values

and demands from various groups of people the sacrifice of their cherished distinctive cultures for the sake of total national unity, is foreign to the Indian mind. Even in Europe where the mental climate is more suited to extreme forms of nationalism, they are kept in check by the stronger force of democracy and it is only in some parts and for short periods of time that they could thrive under fascist governments. In India, past tradition as well as present circumstances favour the growth of a peculiar type of nationhood which promotes a common national culture but at the same time ensures for various communities freedom to maintain and develop their own cultural and religious traditions, so long as they are not detrimental to national unity and the general welfare.

Once this point is cleared up, there is no doubt that India is fully capable of achieving lasting national unity. All that physical and historical forces could do to create the necessary preconditions for such a unity has been done. What is now required is a conscious effort to promote the forces of unity and to put down those of division and disunity.

IV

All these conditions which we have so far discussed are necessary but not sufficient to make a nation. They are the preconditions of nationhood, but the essential condition which actually constitutes it is the general will of a people to be a nation. The question, does such a will exist in India, may appear to be merely rhetorical after the acceptance of the Indian Constitution by a representative Constituent Assembly and its endorsement in six general elections based on universal adult suffrage. There is no doubt that both these historical events provide final legal sanctions or what has been evident to all observes for at least a quarter of a century, that

the people of India in the restricted sense of Bharat (with which we are concerned in the present discussion) want to have a common political order and want that order to be a secular, democratic and what has become quite explicit of late, a socialist state. What we want to find out now is if this will to national unity is founded on the solid rock of harmony and mutual confidence among the various groups so as to make it as strong and lasting as all of us earnestly desire it to be.

It is an extremely unpalatable truth, but it has to be stated, that in India some sections of the minorities—whether religious, racial or cultural—are not with or without justification satisfied by the treatment meted out to them by the respective majorities, but constantly complain of invidious discrimination against them. This discrimination is according to them generally exercised in three fields—political, economic and cultural. In the political field members of minority groups are often excluded, in spite of their acknowledged ability, from leadership of a political party or membership of a legislative body or cabinet; in the economic field they find it is made difficult body or cabinet; in the economic field they find it is made difficult for them to get into public or private services or business; in the cultural field efforts are made to suppress their distinctive culture, specially their language. It must be said in all fairness that in the political and economic field such discrimination is, in the first place, not universal, and in the second place, meets with strong condemnation and opposition from responsible leaders of public opinion and members of Government. But cultural intolerance is so widespread and so strongly rooted that few of out leaders have the inclination or the courage to raise their voice against it. The reason why this intolerance, which is against all Indian tradition, has affected so many

people, is that it appears in the guise of patriotism. Many people sincerely believe that in order to establish a strong and lasting unity on an all-India level (or regional level) it is necessary that in the whole of the Indian Union (or in the whole of the regional unit) there should be one culture and one language, the language and culture of the majority; and that uniformity can only be achieved by blotting out of existence, or at least keeping down to a subordinate position, the languages and the cultural traditions of the minorities. In their sincere but pathetic zeal they do not realize that this repressive cultural policy is not only against all principles of democracy and justice, against all the traditions of Indian tolerance, but is likely to lead to the opposite of what is aimed at.

The attempt to achieve national unity at the expense of national languages and cultures will arouse such resentment and unrest among the various and numerous minorities that the considerable unity we have at present will be destroyed, and the peace and freedom of the country endangered. There can be no doubt that the propagation of the link language throughout India, and of the regional languages in their respective regions, is absolutely necessary and so is the attempt to achieve a greater uniformity of life and outlook in the country. Without a common language and a wider range of common culture the Indian nation will remain weak and unstable. But this sacred cultural mission can only be carried out by ceaseless effort and missionary zeal, not by force. We will discuss in its proper place what effective measures could be adopted to propagate a common language and culture without doing violence to the languages and cultures of the minorities. What we would like to emphasise here is that, though in India most of the preconditions of nationhood as well as the essential conditions, i.e. the general will

to nationhood exist, the latter is weak in one respect. The minorities, cultural and religious, do not have enough confidence in the ability of the majorities to honour the guarantee given by the Constitution of India for the protection of minority rights in the political, economic and cultural fields. Unless the majority are wise and prudent enough to give adequate attention to the real or imaginary grievances of the minorities and make a sincere effort to satisfy them, the dissatisfaction of the minorities, which appears to be an insignificant rift in the lute, may some day disturb the whole harmony of national life. The price of unity, like that of liberty, is eternal watchfulness. The majorities in truly democratic countries which hold ruling power as a sacred trust have always to be on the alert. The fear among the minorities that their statutory rights are not respected, even when unjustified, has to be taken seriously and every possible effort has to be made to dispel it. It would be ungrateful not to acknowledge that after independence, and especially during the last ten years, the Central Government and State Governments have taken a number of steps in this direction. But it is one of the matters in which governments cannot do much without the active cooperation of the people. So the problem can find no real and lasting solution unless the cultural majorities make up their minds to do everything possible to show genuine tolerance towards the respective minorities and foster in their minds a sense of complete security. Cultural tolerance within the country will not only be a source of strength to the Indian nation but also a guarantee that the new India will be tolerant towards other nations with cultures different from hers, and will not degenerate into cultural chauvinism which is as bad as, if not worse than, its political variety.

I hope the foregoing pages have given the reader some

idea how necessary it is to put the new Indian nationhood on a firm and sure foundation, to evolve a pattern of cultural life in the country with a variety of colours and designs worked harmoniously on a ground colour of unfading and indelible unity, and that this great object cannot be achieved by impatient haste or compulsion but only through immense patience, infinite love and ceaseless labour of which Mahatma Gandhi has set an ideal example.

India's cultural history of several thousand years shows that the subtle but strong thread of unity which runs through the infinite multiplicity of her life, was not woven by stress or pressure of power groups but the vision of seers, the vigil of saints, the speculation of philosophers and the imagination of poets and artists, and that these are the only means which can be used to make this national unity wider, stronger and more lasting. This book has been written to tell this simple truth.

But in the course of these discussions we will come across another vital problem—the struggle between the old and the new which is raging in our minds today. Obviously it is not possible to do justice to this problem in this book. It requires a separate book.

Chapter I

The Bases of Indian Culture



There are two different sets of theories about the origin of culture—the idealistic and the materialistic. Philosophers and historians subscribe to some form of the one or the other or make an attempt to harmonise them. According to the former, at some particular stage of cultural evolution, an individual or a group of individuals through intuition, inspiration or revelation coming from some supreme power, catch a glimpse of higher values or 'ideas'. This vision assumes a certain objective mental form in their particular social environment and becomes the group ideal, which is then objectified into certain mental and material characteristics making up what is called culture. Thus, for instance, according to the idealistic theory, the rishis of the Vedic Age caught a glimpse of certain ideas through divine inspiration or through their own intuition which, in due course, took the form of an ideal suited to the social conditions and intellectual capacity of the Aryan community. They tried to put this ideal into practice in the physical environment of the Indo-Gangetic valley and in the process were created the ideas and institutions which constituted the Vedic culture. The latter class of theories say that the starting-point of culture is the physical environment. In the first stage, such factors as the climate, the material resources and the instruments of pro-

duction used by a people put their particular stamp on man's collective life. Then principles and beliefs based on the experience gained from life take shape and finally, by a process of abstraction, we have the ideal concepts which we come to regard as self-existing entities and designate as ideas. Thus advocates of the Naturalistic Theory will explain the origin of the Vedic culture by saying that it is based primarily on the agricultural life which the nomadic Aryans adopted when they came to India and on that basis they gradually reared the edifice of their religion, their philosophy, their social order.

It is not my purpose here to enter into the complicated discussions and arguments of the various schools of philosophical thought for and against these theories. My study of history and archaeology, such as it is, leads me to the view that the evolution of culture is the result of the interplay of both the factors—the physical environment and metaphysical ideas. In any case, both the theories recognise the part played by physical environment in the evolution of culture, though they assign varying degrees of importance to it. What has to be emphasised here is that the concrete element of culture, which is represented by physical environment and social conditions, may be more or less important than the ideational element (represented by ideas, theories and beliefs), but it is really that which gives local colour to a culture and thus constitutes the special national element. Ideas, theories and beliefs are not bound to any particular locality. They leap across racial, national and geographical boundaries, and establish themselves in any part of the world; but the concrete element of culture is confined to its own particular locality. In every country we find different types of ideas and beliefs, but the concrete aspect of the culture determined by the geographical and social conditions is the same. When we

talk of the peculiar common culture of a country we are really concerned with these geographical factors which find expression not only in material forms but also create a special mental atmosphere. It is the atmosphere which gives to the people of a country a common outlook and temperament though they may differ in their religious and philosophical ideas. This common national temper and mind is the most important source of the common national culture. Amongst other sources are the new religious or philosophical movements which take their birth in the country from time to time, or the cultures of people who have come from outside and settled in that country, or of those with whom that country has come into contact in war or trade and commerce. But it should be clearly understood that only such elements of these different cultures are considered to be part of the common national cultures as can be incorporated so harmoniously with the collective mind of the people that all sections and communities regard them as their own. The complex formed from these elements is called National Culture.

India's national culture also consists of these two elements: the common temperament and outlook which constitutes the Indian mind and the intellectual influences of various movements and cultures which have been incorporated harmoniously with the national mind. Amongst these are included cultures which existed in India in the prehistoric period, those with which the country had a temporary contact, those which came from outside and made India their home, and lastly the revolutionary intellectual movements which developed in the country itself from time to time.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of India's geographical configuration is the fact that, barring the mountainous regions of the north and the Eastern and Western Ghats of

the southern Peninsula, the whole country consists either of plains or low plateaus, watered by big rivers. Leaving aside a few cold regions, the climate in the entire county is temperate during one part of the year and hot during the other part. In Bengal and some of the hilly regions, there is an abundance of rain but in most parts of the country the rains are moderate and confined to a particular part of the year. In some years parts of the country receive no rainfall at all. While the larger part of the country can be said to have a uniform climate, actually we find all varieties, from the hottest to the coldest and from the most moist to the driest climates. Likewise, the nature of the soil differs enormously from place to place, with the result that practically all kinds of vegetable and mineral products are available in the country.

Naturally, a country which consists mainly of plains, is well irrigated, and has ample sunshine for the greater part of the year, is specially suitable for agriculture. That is why, from time immemorial, agriculture has been the main occupation of the people in India. As different parts of the country differ in their products, and these can easily be transported by means of natural waterways or roads that can be constructed without much difficulty, internal trade developed to a considerable extent. External trade, through land and sea routes, also flourished on a large scale, but it was carried on by foreigners for many centuries, and Indians themselves played a minor part. The bulk of the Indian people did not take to maritime trade readily because the sea was far removed from the hinterland of the country; only the inhabitants of the coastal regions took it up to any appreciable extent. So under the influence of the physical features and forces, India's economic life developed on an agricultural pattern and this had a marked influence on the shaping of her culture as a whole. It stressed the values of peace and

constructive activity more emphatically than those of war and destruction. We meet manifestations of this spirit throughout the history of Indian culture.

The most noteworthy feature of India's economic life is the fact that, while on account of a warm and temperate climate, the basic needs of life are fewer than in colder countries, the resources needed for satisfying them are ample. People's basic needs in the way of food, clothing and fuel are very limited and these can be produced easily and in sufficient quantity. It is true that partly on account of our own inefficiency and partly as a legacy of an indifferent foreign government, millions of our countrymen are in a state of abject poverty, but history bears witness to the fact that this was not always the case. Before the British period, no acute shortage of the basic requirements of life was experienced except during periods of drought, from time to time in particular parts of the country. This fact has a special significance for us because, although economic urges are always an important factor in the life of man, they begin to obsess his mind and dominate his entire life and activity when he is denied the satisfaction of his basic needs. This truth is illustrated by the fact that the economic element played a much more important role in colder countries, where during the early stages of civilisation, man had to concentrate all his attention and energy on the satisfaction of his material needs. This was not so in the warmer countries and consequently economic urges have played a comparatively smaller role in the evolution of Indian culture.

The influence of climate and economic resources on the material aspects of culture, e.g. food, dress, modes of living, etc., is too obvious to need any discussion. No one would deny the fact that the material aspect of Indian culture is also moulded on the pattern of its physical and economic envi-

ronment. But when one notices the differences which characterise the people's modes of living and behaviour in various regions, one is apt to wonder whether, barring certain common features which the imitation of Western civilisation has produced in the educated classes, there are many common elements at all in Indian civilisation. We shall survey late the present cultural situation in India and show that a common element has always been, and is still present, although foreign invasions on the one hand and internal forces of disintegration on the other, have been constantly and counteracting it.

Beside influencing material culture, the physical environment shapes the physique and features of a people and no matter how marked may be the differences in features amongst the people of India, there are some common characteristics which distinguish them from other nations. This direct effect of the physical environment on the development of their physique is fairly obvious. But its indirect effect on their temperament and character, on their mental, social and moral life is not so apparent. It is therefore necessary to explain at some length how geographical factors, specially the climate of the country, have given to Indians a general outlook and temperament and helped to mould their thought and action.

Try to divest your mind of the concept of India which has been created by a few modern industrialised towns and visualise a vast area of land steeped in the mysterious silence of a moonlit night in summer. You have finished your day's work and have retired to bed but, having had a nap during the day, you do not feel sleepy. The feeling of solitude, which is ever present in the dreary atmosphere of an Indian summer, has become deeper. You feel as if there is nothing in the great infinite universe except you and the star-sprangled heavens. For the moment, all your feelings and desires, your

cognition and will, in fact your whole self, are steeped in something which can be called contemplation or meditation, for want of a better term. In such a state of mind all the sensory distinctions disappear and the subjective experience of unity is unconsciously transferred to the objective world. The intellect, whose function is to create unity in our perceptions, think of all creation as one, and imagination, which is free from the fetters of sense and perception, visualises this unity.

Such is the atmosphere in which the Indian mind has grown and developed. Naturally, therefore, it has two main characteristics—the capacity for contemplation which dominates all other mental powers, and the capacity to see and apprehend unity in diversity. Students of India's cultural history know that thought has always had a high place in the scale of values in India. But it was not purely abstract or speculative but its direct intuitive apprehension in which the thinker finds himself steeped in love and reverence for the object of this thought. Such thinking is more religious than philosophical. That is why religious philosophy has always occupied a central place in India's cultural life. Likewise, on account of the second characteristic mentioned above, the Indian mind in its interpretation of the universe and in the formulation of its thought has tried to reduce the diversity of its manifestations to a unity.

Let us not misunderstand the important of what has been said above. It should not be taken to mean that we regard these characteristics of the Indian mind, or others to be mentioned later, as absolutely valuable or that we are unaware of the dangers associated with them. We are fully conscious of the fact that the natural inclinations of individuals as well as groups are often one-sided and it is necessary, for the proper development of the individual or national char-

acter, to cultivate them with a proper combination of encouragement and restraint. At the same time, it is a recognised fact that the fundamental nature of individuals and nations cannot be entirely changed; it can only be modified within certain limits set by its own natural capacities. There is no doubt that often speculation has so dominated the Indian mind that it has weakened the powers of action and some Indian thinkers had to revolt against it. Similarly, the search for, and love of unity, was sometimes carried to such extremes as to altogether deny the reality of the manifold phenomena which make up the physical world. Then, in order to restore the balance, emphasis had to be laid on the surely materialistic side of reality. But on the whole the supremacy of thought and perception of unity in diversity are precious traits of the Indian mind and they are mirrored in all the cultures which had developed in India.

These characteristics of the Indian mind have also considerably influenced the moral values of the people. We have already noted in fact that, on account of its peculiar intellectual trend, it regards the apprehension of Ultimate Reality to be the highest value and gives the practical values a lower status. Similarly, its perception of unity as the principle of life leads it to regard harmony, rather than struggle, as the basis of the moral order. In this respect the contrast between the Indian mind and the modern Western mind stands out clearly. The Western mind assigns great moral importance to the struggle between man and his physical environment and regards the conquest of nature as the key to cultural progress. The Indian mind, on the other hand, has developed in an environment which is blessed by a warm climate, a rich soil, abundant productivity and easy communication. Its normal relationship to nature is not, therefore, one of struggle but of harmony. Its fundamental moral consciousness does not re-

gard the world as full of forces of evil, which man must fight and overcome, but as a place where the law of goodness and justice operates and to which man has to adapt his life. If this feeling of harmony with the universe is directed properly in the light of the highest values of life it becomes a vitalising and practical ideal. Otherwise, it is apt to degenerate into fatalism and inaction.

One would expect that in a mind where contemplation dominates, passion and desires would not be very strong. But that is not entirely the case with the Indian temperament, which is emotional and imaginative, as well. Emotionalism and sensuousness are essential characteristics of the Indian, but as these tendencies are opposed to the speculative trend, there is always a strong effort to suppress them. We can constantly see this ebb and flow of abandon and repression, self-indulgence and self-denial in the cultural history of the country and its worst periods have been those in which self-indulgence dominated the life of the people. They were, however, followed by a natural reaction and the phase of self-denial which served as purgative to cleanse the soul of its accumulated grossness and to bring it back to normality.

We have seen that, on the whole, in most parts of the country, there is a certain regularity and moderation in the changes of the weather. Barring the amount of rainfall which may differ considerably from year to year, the climatic conditions are fairly steady. Every season begins at fixed times and its intensity varies within fixed limits. Cataclysmic phenomena which disturb the normal routine of the natural process are rare. There are no volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are slight and infrequent. No stronger natural accidents than storms and tempests of moderate intensity are experienced by the people. How has this long observation of regularity and continuity of natural processes influenced the Indian

mind? Perhaps the most important effect has been the feeling that the operation of the moral law is just as regular and continuous as that of the law of nature. In primitive stages man does not distinguish at all between the moral and the physical world. His moral conceptions are based entirely on observation of nature. So from the very beginning, the Indian mind has adhered firmly to the conviction that the moral consequences of every action are as definite and inevitable as the succession of seasons. The doctrine of predestination, which is apt to degenerate into fatalism, is in reality the connecting link between the working of the moral law and the natural law, as conceived by the Indian mind. Its essence is that the consequences of man's action take place in the physical world and are to some extent subject to laws of nature, over which man has no control. Obviously this theory is not objectionable in itself, but just as the element of quietism present in the Indian mind can, during the periods of decadence, easily lead to inaction, so can predestination easily take the form of fatalism.

There is another characteristic of the Indian mind which also originates from the influence of the regularity and continuity with which the laws of nature operate in this part of the world, namely, that the changes which occur in its habits of thought and action are gradual, not abrupt. In other words, the law of its being is not revolution but evolution. But this does not mean that the Indian mind is incapable of undergoing big changes or that it always takes a very long time over them. What we want to suggest is that the process of change can be felt at every step and its stages can be clearly marked out. The main difference between evolution and revolution is that in the former we can see all the links in the chain, while in the latter, some of the links are not perceptible and so, when the chain is complete we experience a sudden and

intense shock. The Indian mind is spared such violent jolts because its reaction to new ideas and movements is conscious and gradual.

We have already seen how the warm, and in some parts moderately hot, climate of the country, the fertility of the soil and the abundance of water made India suitable for agriculture. So agriculture was started here as soon as the crudest implements for tilling the soil were available. As a rule communities which took very early to agriculture are matriarchal and have a deep and strong feeling for family and social life. All those constructive qualities which are necessary for cultural development are more prominent in them than in communities which were originally nomadic. They are more peace-loving and humane. That is why in certain parts of the country, e.g. in the Indus Valley, culture had passed out of the primitive into the secondary stage of its development a couple of thousand years before the advent of the Aryans. Later, many nomadic and warlike people came to the country and their admixture modified the national temperament considerably. But qualities like the depth of feeling for family life, love of peace and kindness have always been, and will continue to be, important ingredients of the Indian character.

Agricultural life and the general geographical conditions, have also played a great part in shaping the political structure and development of the country. Obviously, in an agricultural country population is not concentrated in a few cities but is scattered over the villages. Even today, the number of cities is comparatively small in India and about eighty per cent of the population lives in villages which are, in many parts, wide apart from one another. Towards the end of the ancient period, the population of the country did not, according to historians, exceed 100,000,000 and, therefore, it

must have been more scattered and the villages situated at greater distances. Under such conditions, political development tends towards decentralisation and so, from the very beginning down to the advent of the British, the basic political unit in India was the village in which the natural democratic tendencies of the rural community expressed themselves in the form of the village assembly or panchayat. But on account of certain other circumstances, this democracy remained confined to the local level.

So the institution of democracy in a nascent state was always present in India though it could not grow to its full stature. Another noteworthy fact is that, although generally the country was divided into many small states, and even when some extensive empire was established, it functioned as a rather loose federation, the idea of political unity has always had a powerful appeal for the Indian mind, so much so that there is one common idea running through the theories of the state developed by such political thinkers of different views as Kautilya, Manu, Vishnu, Yajnavalkya and others namely, that it is necessary for an ideal ruler to conquer other states within the country and bring them under one sway. At the same time the conquering king is advised to entrust the government of the conquered territory to some member of the ruling family and to preserve its ancient social laws and customs. Thus from the point of view of political organisation also we find the same idea of unity in diversity dominating the Indian mind.

These are a few examples to illustrate the characteristics of the Indian mind and the temperament produced by its special physical and economic environment. They permeate, as a permanent and common element, all the cultures that were either born or came from outside but developed in this country. The sum total of these common characteristics, the

national mind, has the same relation to the life of an individual. It may be cultivated, improved or modified; it cannot be killed or repressed or entirely changed.

But the influence of the physico-social environment is only one of the elements, the realistic element, in the formation of culture. The other important element is the ideational, i.e. ideas, beliefs, principles which have their own origin in the consciousness of the higher values. This latter element, as we have seen, is not rooted in a particular locality but it can and does find its way from one country or people to another. If we look at the history of the world we will find numerous examples how a religion or a system of philosophy or a political or economic theory originates in one part of the world and in course of time, spreads over others. Different cultures, belonging to varied types of geographical environment, may accept it in full or in part, according to their special needs and circumstances.

Thus when we consider the ideational aspect of the Indian mind we have to remember that in the first place the ideas which have gone into the making of this mind are not all the products of this soil but some have come from outside. Secondly, they have influenced various groups and classes of people in the country in different degrees, with the result that we find different religions and cultures in India; but there is a certain part which has been assimilated by the common mind and has became the greatest common measure of the various sections of the people. If we study the cultural history of India we find that whenever any new movement of thought originated here or came from outside, it resulted temporarily in accentuating the existing differences. But soon the Indian mind set into motion its process of seeking unity in diversity, and after some time the conflicting elements were harmonised to lay the foundation of a new culture. In order

to deal with the present problem of a common culture it is necessary for us to know how this problem has been solved in the past on various occasions.

The cultural history of India, as of other countries, can be divided into three periods: the ancient, the medieval and the modern. But it is necessary to remember that these three periods in Indian history do not correspond to those in the European in point of time. The ancient period in India begins about 5000 B.C. and continues up to the end of the tenth century A.D., the medieval period continues up to the start of the eighteenth century, and so the modern period is only two and three-quarter centuries old.

About a thousand years after the beginning of the ancient period, a national culture was for the first time established in India. This was the Vedic Hindu culture which came into being as a result of the interplay of the Vedic Aryan and the pre-Aryan cultures. After some time there was a reaction against certain aspects of this culture and Buddhism formed the basis of the new national culture. Although Buddhism had a deep influence over Indian mind, the culture based on it did not last as the national culture for any length of time. Its decay was followed by the rise of a new Hindu culture which was again the result of harmonising many conflicting tendencies in the cultural life of the country. To distinguish it from the earlier Vedic Hindu culture it may be called the puranic culture. At the end of the ancient period, long before the advent or the Muslims, the cultural life of India had again become disorganised. But after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the process of assimilation and fusion started afresh and by the time the Mughal period commenced the great edifice of a Hindu-Muslim culture, the Hindustani culture, had been erected. This time there was a new and significant departure. The Hindustani culture was

based not on religion but on some sort of vague national feeling in the political sense.

In this book I propose to present a brief survey of all the stages of the development of the national culture from the coming of the Aryans to the end of the Mughal period. I shall then proceed to discuss how, with the advent of the British, the dominant position of Western culture resulted in pushing the national culture into the background and why the contact of Indian culture with that of the West failed to produce any new fusion which could provide the basis of a new national culture. Then I shall try to follow the trend of the present cultural movements in India and discuss in what direction they should be oriented in order to help the evolution once again of a rich and harmonious national culture.

Chapter II



The Fountain-Head
The Indus Valley Culture
(3250 B.C.–2000 B.C.)

Up to the beginning of the twentieth century the general impression among historians was that the secondary stage of culture began in India after the advent of the Aryans about 1500 B.C. so that Indian culture was regarded as the youngest among the ancient cultures. But in the first quarter of this century the excavations made by the Archaeological Department of India at Harappa in west Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Sind led to the startling discovery that much earlier than that, in the bronze age, there existed in the valley of the Indus a fairly advanced urban civilisation. Later excavations in other parts of the country have so far revealed that in area this culture covered the whole of Punjab, Sind Baluchistan and a considerable part of Kathiawad extending on one side to west Uttar Pradesh and on the other side along the coastal region on the west to a part of south India. This culture is believed to have reached its zenith about 3000 B.C.. But it had come into being at least 250 years earlier and must have continued till about 2000 B.C. when it was destroyed probably by barbarous hordes from the west. So it should be counted among the oldest cultures of the world along with those of Elam, Sumeria, Babylonia, ancient Egypt and an-

cient China. The Dravidians in south India, who were in close contact with the Sind Valley Civilisation, had by 2000 B.C. reached a high stage of cultural life and kept the torch of civilisation burning during the centuries preceding the advent of the Aryans when north India was plunged in darkness. So we can rightly say that India has maintained a more or less advanced cultural life since its emergence 5000 years ago. No other country except China affords an example of a civilisation continuing without a break for such a long time.

The ruins of the ancient cities found in Mohenjodaro and Harappa show, according to Sir John Marshall, that the standard of civilised life reached by the people inhabiting these cities was higher than that of the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians and equal to that of the Sumerians. They were big cities with networks of regular wide roads, canals for irrigation and sewers for drainage. This shows that they had not only made fairly good progress in civil engineering but had some idea of town-planning also and that there was some civic body like a municipality or a local board. Among the archaeological finds in Mohenjodaro and Harappa are instruments, weapons and utensils made of earth, copper and bronze. Some of the earthenware are painted. Figures of human beings and animals made of baked clay and bronze have been found in abundance. The mot common among these is the figure of a semi-nude woman wearing a fan-shaped cap. This represents the mother-goddess worshipped by them. But the best specimens of the art of that age are seals bearing pictures of Brahmani bulls, elephants, buffaloes, tigers, etc., or inscribed with pictographs. Ornaments of gold, faience and beads, ivory dice and hairpins bear testimony to the considerable progress which the various industries had made. The gold and silver ornaments in particular were, in the words of Sir John Marshall, 'so well finished and so highly polished

that they might have come out of a Bond Street jeweller's of today rather than from a prehistoric house of 5000 years ago'. But the most remarkable thing was that in the valley of the Indus, people had not only learnt to grow cotton but had developed the textile industry which, for centuries afterwards, was unknown in other countries. The discovery of Indus Valley seals in Mesopotamia, Arabia and other countries of West Asia is an indication of commercial and cultural relations which must have existed between these countries and India.

As the pictographs inscribed on the seals of Mohenjodaro and Harappa have not yet been deciphered, we know very little about the mental and spiritual life of the ancient inhabitants of the Indus Valley. All that we can say on the strength of the available material is that their religious beliefs and practices are to some extent reflected in Hinduism. The figures shown on the seals provide ample evidence that they worshipped Shakti or the mother-goddess and sacrificed goats and other animals to her. There is no doubt that the Hindus inherited both these practices from them. Some seals have been found with representations of a god resembling Shiva. In one of these he is shown with three faces wearing a horned head-dress which was replaced later by Hindus with a *trisula* or trident. The worship of rivers, animals and trees and also the *pipal* is traced to that period. Among animals the bull, the buffalo, the tiger and the elephant were possibly regarded as sacred. In Hindu mythology the bull became the vehicle (*vahana*) of Shiva. The use of the swastika and wheel as the symbols of the sun also dates from that period. Some scholars think that the stress laid on belief in spirits and magic in the *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*, which is not in keeping with the teachings of the *Rig Veda*, was due to the influence exercised by traditions of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

Opinions differ about the origin of the builders of this civilisation. Some regard them as immigrant Aryans or Sumerians and some as Dravidians. But most scholars agree that they belonged to the old Austric race with a mixture of the races coming from the Mediterranean coast. But before reaching the level of an urban civilisation they had lived in India for centuries so that their culture was in spite of some resemblance with the Sumerian, on the whole, essentially Indian. It is very likely that when further research reveals to us a complete picture of the Indus Valley Civilisation we shall find in it all the essential features of what later became the common culture of India.

Even now there are strong reasons to believe that the Indus Valley culture was in its last phase closely associated with the Dravidian culture and both had a deep influence on each other. We will find later that the Dravidians made an important contribution to the national culture of India. So if the Indus Valley civilisation has not played a direct role in shaping the present culture of India it has certainly exercised an indirect influence through the Dravidian culture.

Chapter III



Two Streams: The Dravidian Culture and the Vedic Culture of the Aryans
(2000 B.C.—1000 B.C.)

About 2000 B.C. when the Indus Valley civilisation was being destroyed in north-west India by the ravages of wild invaders, the Dravidian Tamil Culture in South India had reached a very high level of development. Archaeological finds point to a long period of commercial and cultural exchange between the Indus Valley culture and the Tamil culture. In the Deccan and other parts of south India burial urns and other earthen pots exactly like those which were used in Mohenjodaro and Harappa have been found. Excavations in the Indus Valley have yielded plenty of shells and pearls which must have come from south India. The presence of nearly fifty per cent Dravidian words in the Brohi language spoken in some parts of Baluchistan is a strong indication that there was a close cultural contact between the Indus Valley and south India in prehistoric times. Obviously this must have been before the destruction of the Indus Valley Civilisation about 2000 B.C. and by that time the Dravidian culture must have reached a very high level so that it could exercise such a deep linguistic influence over an advanced urban civilisation.

According to tradition, early Tamil literature can be

traced as far back as 2500 B.C. and there is positive evidence that long before 1000 B.C. south India had three *sangams* (academies) at old Madura, Kapadapuram, and modern Madurai. The most prominent member of the first *sangam* was Agastya who wrote the first Tamil grammar called *Agathiam*. There is a legend that he was an Aryan preacher from the north who had come to south India to propagate the Vedic religion. His twelve disciples wrote a large number of treatises on grammar, literature, music, dance, etc. One of these treatises *Tolkappiam*, written about 1000 B.C. is still extant. It deals essentially with Tamil grammar but throws valuable light on the cultural life of ancient Dravidians.

In prehistoric times south India, the present home of Dravidian culture, extended very far to the south of the present peninsula. In course of time much of it was submerged under water by continuous violent storms. In one Dravidian community the matriarchal system prevailed and generally mothers were given a high status throughout Dravidian society. There was no rigid caste system. But later, various classes based partly on birth and partly on occupation developed. The most common religious cult was that of the mother-goddess. Various trees, demons, spirits and the snake (Naga Raja) were also worshipped.

The Dravidians had reached a high level of civilisation. They had made considerable progress in agriculture and engineering, put up dams across rives for irrigation and built cities with walls around them. Their industries, specially the weaving of cotton and woolen cloth, dying, making gold and silver ornaments inlaid with precious stones, were fairly advanced. Trade by land and sea was carried on with the countries of east and west Asia. There is evidence of cultural contact between south India and Egypt about 2000 B.C. Dravidians had their own script, numerals and calendar. The progress which

they had made in science and literature can be judged by the existence of three academies in an age when the rest of the world had no idea of such institutions.

About 1500 B.C. while the Dravidian culture was flourishing in the south, the dark period following the destruction of the Indus Valley Civilisation was coming to an end in the north-west and immigrant Aryans were laying the foundations of a new culture infused with vigour and vitality. There is much difference of opinion about the original home of the Aryans. Formerly, the general idea was that they were the inhabitants of Central Asia. But later researches in the field have made some scholars think that they originally belonged to Scandinavia, others that they inhabited the part of Asian Russia to the east of the Urals. But the only thing which can be said with certainty is that they came to India from the north-west. The hymns to their gods, which they composed probably after they had come to India, were later collected in the *Rig Veda*. The *Rig Veda* is not only a holy scripture of Hinduism but also the earliest document of Indian history. Most historians think that the hymns of the *Rig Veda* is not only a holy scripture of Hinduism but also the earliest document of Indian history. Most historians think that the hymns of the *Rig Veda* were composed between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C.. The religious and cultural life of the Aryans during these 500 years was deeply influenced by the *Rig Veda* and it is also the source of all that we know about the period. So it is called the period of Vedic culture.

The hub of this culture was the land between the Sutlej and the Yamuna in east Punjab, and it was gradually spreading eastwards over the Doab or the region between the Yamuna and Ganga. The Aryans had not yet completely subdued the aboriginal tribes whom they called the Dasyus and against whom they were engaged in continuous warfare. They

had brought with them a primitive nomadic culture. But their religious ideas and practices, their art of warfare and their poetry were fairly advanced. In India they began to live the settled life of peasants and the various tribes established their little rural democracies.

Representative bodies of tribal chiefs known as the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* ruled under the general control of the raja or king. Kingship was usually hereditary. The main function of the king was to command the army in battle. In this he was assisted by the Commander-in-Chief. Next in importance to the king was the Grand Priest (*Purohita*) who presided over sacrificial ceremonies and acted in many cases as the medicine-man curing disease through incantation (*mantra*).

In the beginning, Aryan society consisted of two classes—the nobles and the common people. But there were no hereditary castes. When the peaceful conditions in India and settled agricultural life had tamed the Aryans, and they had given up fighting the aborigines and wanted to assimilate them in their social system, their pride made them take special precautions that the blood of the Dasyus did not mix with theirs. So the Dasyus were constituted into a separate caste called the Sudras with the lowest position in society and the Aryans were forbidden to intermarry with them. Later, social distinctions became more pronounced and rigid. Among the Aryans themselves the ruling and fighting class (Kshatriyas), the priests (Brahmins) the peasants and traders (Vaishyas), grew into separate hereditary castes with restrictions on intermarriage, etc. This social gradation was given a religious sanction by invoking a verse from the *Rig Veda* to the effect that the Brahmins came from the face of the Creator, the Kshatriyas from His arms, the Vaishyas from His thighs and the Sudras from the soles of His feet.

The basic unit of society was the family which was gov-

erned by the patriarchal system. That is to say the father was regarded as the head of the heritage passed from father to son. The mother was treated with great respect but her position in the household was inferior to that of the father. As a rule monogamy was the most widely practised form of marriage.

The Aryans had taken to agriculture but cattle-breeding still held an important place in their economy and was regarded as an occupation superior to that of the tilling of soil. Cattle was priced high and used as a measure of value and medium of exchange. Their flesh was generally eaten by the people. Sheep and goats were also kept and horses were used for drawing war chariots. Houses were built of mud. The art of making bronze utensils and weapons had made great progress. Spinning, weaving, dyeing, and the carpenter's and gold-smith's trade were also common.

Singing and dancing were commonly practised but the most popular pastime was gambling. People drank intoxicating liquors in excess, specially the juice of the *Soma* which acquired a religious significance as seen in the *Sama Veda*.

However, the Aryans had not reached any significant level of material civilisation and had not yet learnt to build cities. But their religious consciousness was of a higher order than that of other ancient peoples. They neither built temples nor worshipped images. Their devotion consisted in burning fires in their hearths, singing hymns to their gods and offering rice, milk, *soma* or animals as sacrifice. In this they were guided by the priests. Before coming to India their objects of worship were natural phenomena. Their principal gods were Indra (thunder), Varuna, Mitra, Surya (the sun), Savitra, Pushana, Vishnu, Usha (the dawn), Arti (the earth), Vayu (air), Agni (fire). The *soma* tree was also regarded as sacred because the feeling of exhilaration induces by its in-

toxicating juice was taken for the state of spiritual bliss.

After coming to India they continued to worship these gods; but the atmosphere of the country radiating Unitism, made them see the unity of reality in the diversity of phenomena and feel the presence of nature's God behind the visible world of nature, as the following verse from the Rig Veda shows:

In the whole universe there was nothing but water.
In the water there was fire which suddenly revealed itself
Showing a glimpse of the One who is the soul of all the gods
To whom shall we offer our devotion.
The One who through his supreme power
Held back water and out of it created energy
To whom shall we offer our sacrifice and our devotion.
He who is the creator of the earth and of the sky
Who is the creator of the intoxicated mighty ocean,
Pray that His wrath does not descend upon us
To whom shall we offer our sacrifice and our devotion.
O Lord of the Universe! None but Thou
Made this whole world of Creation
Fulfil the Object of our Prayers
Give us riches and happiness.

The Dravidian culture in south India and the Vedic culture of the Aryans in north-west India were in those days two streams flowing apart. But the time was near when the confluence of the two was to give birth to the first national culture of India.

Chapter IV



The First Confluence: Vedic Hindu Culture
(1000 B.C.–600 B.C.)

In the next four centuries the simple Vedic culture reached a higher stage of development and changed considerably in the process. The fundamental change was that, on the one hand, the Aryan mind gave a philosophical depth to the idea of unity which had already begun to shimmer through the *Rig Veda* and, on the other hand, it made the old Indian traditions which it had taken mostly from the Dravidians an integral part of its religion. Thus a new common religion was developed which we may call the Vedic Hindu religion and which served as the foundation of a new culture, the Vedic Hindu culture. All that we have been able to know about these 400 years has come to us from three other collections of religious hymns, the *Yajur Veda* the *Atharva Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and other related literature. The four *Vedas*, their commentaries the *Brahmanas*, the appendices of the *Brahmanas* known as the *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads* are regarded by many as the revealed scriptures of the Hindus. It is these books which have supplied historians with material for their accounts of the Vedic and the Vedic Hindu cultures.

According to tradition, early in this period a great battle called the Mahabharata, in which rulers of all the Indian states took part, was fought between two neighbouring Aryan tribes,

the Kurus and the Panchalas. It is not directly mentioned in the *Vedas*. But there are indications that about 900 B.C. there was a terrible holocaust after which the political and cultural centre of the Aryans shifted from east Punjab to Hastinapur, the capital of the Kurus in the Gangetic Doab. Later the Aryans gradually moved further to the east and set up the states of Koshala (Oudh), Kashi (Banaras), Vatsa (near Allahabad) and Videha and Magadha in Bihar. At the same time they began to advance southwards. The story of the *Ramayana* with Shri Ramchandra, the son of the raja of Ayodhya as its hero, refers to the war the Aryans fought with the help of the Dravidians against the Raja of Lanka (Ceylon) and the Agastya legend, mentioned in the last chapter, shows that about the same time Aryan missionaries were propagating their religion among the Dravidians.

Recently a theory has been advanced that the *Ramayana* was composed long before the *Mahabharata* and another that the story of the *Ramayana* does not refer to a war between the Aryans and the Dravidians but to one between two Aryan kingdoms, one of which called Lanka in the poem was not what we now know as Ceylon or Sri Lanka but a place situated in Madhya Pradesh. But both the theories are a subject of controversy and have not so far been generally accepted.

As we have said before, great progress was made during this period in political and economic organisation as well as in material civilisation. Now a well-knit monarchical state had taken the place of the primitive tribal democracy. The raja was the sovereign but not an autocratic ruler. He had to be guided by the advice of the Brahmins, old traditions and public opinion. The permanent capitals of the rajas had grown into cities and the political centre of gravity had shifted from the rural to the urban area. The *Sabha* and the *Samiti* had lost their pristine importance. Circles of noblemen had

formed round the court and monopolised all the more lucrative administrative posts. The religious ceremony of the coronation and other ceremonies and sacrifices had been introduced. Of these the most famous was the *Ashvamedh* or horse sacrifice. It was performed by a raja whom the rulers of a considerable part of the country had acknowledged as their overlord. The raja who aspired to be an emperor would let a horse, dedicated to the gods, loose to roam about the country. It was followed by the army of the raja. All the chiefs and rulers through whose territories the horse chanced to pass had either to acknowledge their allegiance to the raja or to fight to capture the horse. If the horse was not captured within a year it was brought back to the capital and sacrificed with great pomp and ceremony.

As far as material life is concerned, the Aryans had already been using tin, lead and towards the end of the period iron, the most useful of metals. They had tamed the elephant and used him for riding as well as for the transport of goods. Agriculture had made considerable progress. Fields were manured and irrigated in various ways. Many crafts had developed into regular vocations like those of the jeweler, goldsmith, brazier, ironsmith, basket-maker, rope-maker, weaver, dyer, carpenter and potter. Rope-walkers, jugglers, fortune-tellers, flute-players and dancers were also thriving. Trade flourished not only within the country but also with Mesopotamia; it had been interrupted with the fall of the Indus Valley Civilisation, and now resumed. But the remarkable thing is that though there was so much economic progress there is no mention of metal coins in the Vedic literature.

The greatest progress in this age centred round religious and philosophical thought as seen in the *Upanishads*. Vedic literature was the preserve of the Brahmins who had so developed their memory as to learn this entire literature by heart

and to transmit it orally from generation to generation. There is no evidence to show that writing was common in those days. But what can be reasonably supposed is that some script was imported to India with the resumption of trade relations with Mesopotamia and this script after being modified and adjusted to Indian phonetics developed into the Brahmi script by the Mauryan period.

As we have said before, religion in this period developed in two directions. One was the way of ritual and devotion which satisfied the craving of the Indian mind for winning the favour of higher powers in order to secure physical well-being and spiritual salvation. The other was the way of asceticism and meditation which catered to its love of speculation and its urge towards the realisation of truth.

The former way was followed by the Aryans in the form of simple sacrifices and prayers. Non-Aryans, on the other hand, put great emphasis on the worship of and devotion to gods. Both these practices were now combined into an elaborate system of sacrifice and worship. Religious rites and prayers assumed great importance in the life of the people. The commentaries on the *Vedas* known as the *Brahmanas* gave detailed instructions for religious sacrifices and the *Aranyakas* revealed their philosophical import. Another effect of non-Aryan influences was that the old Aryan gods lost their former importance and new gods of a mixed Aryan and non-Aryan origin became the main objects of devotion. Of these the most prominent were Mahadeva and Vishnu. Mahadeva seems to have combined the characteristic features of the Aryan god Rudra, the Indus Valley god Shiva, and the south Indian deity Pashupati. The name Vishnu was borrowed from that of an Aryan sun-god but his conception as the creator and preserver of the universe was purely Indian. Among minor gods the Dravidian Nagaraja and some others were also

included in the pantheon.

The latter way, which the Aryan mind adopted in the peculiar Indian environment specially conducive to meditation, was quite new. Though the religion of the *Rig Veda* itself was not confined to the worship of natural phenomena it had, however, towards the end of the last period seen in the mirror of nature a reflection of the one God, the creator of nature. But now the seers of the Vedic Hindu age, building upon the vague hints found in the *Rig Veda* about the reality of the world, God and man, raised a stately structure of the religious philosophy of Unitism. The unity of God is the basic creed of the *Upanishads*. But they conceive of God as the spirit pervading the universe. They have tried to give their own unitarian interpretation of the belief in many gods and to sacrifices offered to them. The gods they regard as the manifestation of the various qualities of the universal spirit, and sacrifice as the symbol of renunciation and self-denial without which no spiritual progress is possible.

This was the first idea of Unitism which the Indian mind put before the world 3000 years ago. Since then to the time of Hegel, philosophical and religious thought has done a great deal of hairsplitting on the subject. But none of these later expositions is so simple, clear and convincing as that of the *Upanishads*. That is why consciously or unconsciously the monistic idea dominated the intellect and the emotions of the Indian people and exercised a deep influence on their way of thinking as well as on their actions.

The *Upanishads* deal with two basic questions which arise in the human mind as soon as there is in it an awakening of moral and religious consciousness. What is the abiding reality behind the changing world of appearance which I see or feel every day in or outside myself? What is the real purpose or my life which I should make the final criterion of my

conduct? The first question had been answered by the *Rig Veda* in its simple, concise way that the abiding reality in man was his true self (*atma*) and outside him the universal spirit (*Brahma*). The *Upanishads* now proceed to discourse about *atma* and *Brahma* so as to facilitate their acceptance by reason.

In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Prajapati answering Indra's question points out to him the characteristics by which the true self or *atma* can be recognised: "The self which is free from sin, old age, death, pain, hunger and thirst, which desires what it should desire and thinks what it should think; that self we must try to know." Prajapati tests Indra's intelligence by identifying *atma* first with the body, then with the state of consciousness in a dream and finally with the unconscious state in a dreamless sleep. But Indra rejects all these answers. The body is obviously liable to change and decay and possesses none of the characteristics of the *atma* mentioned above. The consciousness in a dream is essentially a series of changing states and cannot therefore be the true self. As for the unconscious state in a dreamless sleep, it has no doubt the negative qualities attributed to *atma* as the individual self. The *atma* is really the universal consciousness functioning in the consciousness of every individual. It can only be intuitively experienced. No intellectual conception is possible.

As for the second part of the question, "What is Brahma?", the *Taittriya Upanishad* deals with it in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son. The son asks the father to explain to him the real nature of *Brahma*. The father tells him the following characteristics of *Brahma*. "That from which all beings come; that to which they all return after death. That is *Brahma*." Then he asks the son to think of a subject possessing these attributes. In other words, the

father and his son are in search of a permanent being or substance which is unchanging in all this flux, the reality behind all these phenomena. The son first of all thinks of matter but finds that it cannot account satisfactorily for the existence of the vegetable and the animal kingdoms. So he identifies *Brahma* with *Pran*, the principle of life but that too does not satisfy him as mere life does not carry with it the consciousness found in man. Then he names the faculty of perception as *Brahma* but when he realizes that reason is higher than perception, he moves on to the concept of pure reason. This is the highest conception of reality for the philosopher but it cannot satisfy the mystic because even pure reason involves the duality of subject and object. The *Taittriya Upanishad* takes the son further on in the search for the unity of reality and identifies *Brahma* with *ananda* or the state of bliss. This is the final stage of the conception of reality which the human mind can reach. Ananda cannot be defined. No quality can be attributed to it. It may be intuitively realised by the mystic but cannot be theoretically conceived by the philosopher. Nevertheless when the mystic wants to communicate his inner experience to others, he has to give a name to the nameless, an expression to the inexpressible. Thus the Upanishad uses the word *ananda* to bring Absolute Reality nearer to our comprehension. It implies a being blissfully absorbed in its own contemplation. Keeping in view these conceptions of *atma* and *Brahma* it is possible to understand the essence of the teachings of the *Upanishads* expressed in the aphorism "*atma* is *Brahma*" or "Thou art It" that is to say the universal being which is the reality behind the physical world is the same as universal consciousness which is the reality behind the human mind.

This is the answer to the first fundamental question posed by the *Upanishads*. Now it is easy to answer the second

question. The ultimate object of human life and the ultimate norm of human conduct is the realisation of the self automatically leading to the realisation to the universal spirit.

Here self does not mean the empirical mind entangled in the maze of needs and desires but the real mind or atma. "Know this that the atma is the master sitting in the chariot of the body; reason is the driver, intellect the rein; senses are the horses and objects the road. The harmony of the mind or intellect with the senses is called 'the enjoyer' by the discerning. But he who is without understanding and immature in reason, his senses are out if control like wild horses drawing the chariot; while he who has understanding his senses are restrained like well trained horses. The unwise, imprudent and intemperate can never reach the eternal world of the spirit but is caught in the cycle of rebirth. But the wise, prudent, and temperate reaches the other world from which nobody comes back to this world. The perfection of self requires self-restraint and temperance, keeping carnal desires under the control of reason. The first step to the realisation of truth is to practice self-denial and self-sacrifice instead of self-indulgence. In this way will the mirror of our mind be free from rust and capable of reflecting the real self (*atma*)."

According to the *Upanishads* there are four stages in life through which the seeker after truth has to pass. He has to live first as a *brahmachari* (celibate student), then as a *grahasta* (householder), as a *vanaprasta* (a hermit) and lastly as a *sannyasin* (a roving ascetic). The pilgrim who sets out on the journey of life has to acquire, one by one, all values—knowledge, wealth, love, service—but he should regard them as intermediate stages and pass through each with his mind fixed on the final destination and his feet moving on towards it. This destination is the realisation of unity, *moksha* (salvation).

The doctrines of *karma* and *sansar* also occupy an im-

portant place in the teaching of the *Upanishads*. *Karma* is the fundamental law of the moral world. Every act, good or bad, performed by man has an impact on his personality. Conscious acts gradually grow into unconscious habits and become part of his character. Now character in its turn determines action followed by its consequences. This is a vicious circle in which our mind is involved. The only way to get out of it is to elevate the individual mind through renunciation, self-sacrifice and the service of our fellow-beings into the universal mind. At this level man becomes free from the compelling force of *karma*. The idea of *sansar* is a logical consequence of *karma* combined with that of the immortality of the soul. If the law of *karma* is inescapable and eternal and if the soul survives after death, then the impact of action on character and of character on action should also continue after death. The process, as the *Upanishads* conceive it is this: after death every individual soul goes, according to its good or bad conduct in life, to heaven or hell and after a short sojourn there is reborn as a superior or inferior being—man or animal. This process continues to repeat itself. But when the individual frees himself from the limits imposed by finiteness through the realisation of the Absolute, he breaks through the vicious circles of karma and *sansar* and attains *moksha* (salvation). The greatest heritage of the Vedic Hindu age is the idea of unitism in the Upanishads generally known as the philosophy of the Vedanta. Moreover the concepts of the four stages of life, and those of *karma* and *sansar* have not only become important parts of the religious faith of the Hindus but have pervaded all Indian poetry and literature.

The impulse given to religious and moral thinking in India during this period became stronger in the sixth century B.C. (when a general wave of creative thought submerged the civilised world from China to Greece) and gave birth to

various scientific, literary and religious movements. This disturbed for some time the cultural unity of the country but enriched the Indian mind with a profusion and variety of new ideas.

Chapter V



Buddhism—Jainism—Schools of Philosophy—The Great Epics
(600 B.C.—200 B.C.)

The common national culture which had developed in the preceding period continued as the main current of cultural life. But during the next eighty centuries new currents of religious and philosophical thought sprang up of which Buddhism, Jainism and the six schools of Hindu philosophy are worth mentioning here. Buddhism brought about such a significant change in the life and thought of the people in a large part of the country that it developed into a separate and more or less independent culture—a rival to the main Hindu culture. From the point of view of cultural history this was a period of debate in which Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism were struggling to put their stamp on the cultural life of India. Finally it was Hinduism which emerged victorious from the struggle and Buddhism practically disappeared from the country, but it left a deep and lasting impression on the Indian mind and Indian life.

This period marks the beginning of Indian history in the proper sense of the word. About the preceding period, our knowledge is, at the most, semi-historical, because its major source is the Vedic literature which gives us no more than some glimpses here and there of the social and cultural

life of the time. On this scanty data it is difficult to base anything like a full account of the period, specially to place the facts chronologically. But as far as the time under discussion is concerned, we have in addition to Hindu, Buddhist and Jain literature another source of information—the writings of the Greeks who had contact with India during this period. The exploitation of the material from all these sources can help, and to some extent has helped, in compiling a more or less authentic historical account.

In the first half of the sixth century the states of Koshala, Magadha and Vatsa still flourished in the region (now called Madhyadesh and Bihar) and a new state of Avanti (Malwa) had come into existence. Of these, Magadha became the largest and the most important. By the time Alexander the Great invaded India (326 B.C.), it had gradually conquered the neighbouring states and grown into a big empire. During the reign of two great rulers of the Maurya dynasty, Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka, the empire expanded till it comprised the whole of India except a small area in the extreme south. Asoka was a Buddhist and a zealous propagator of Buddhism. Under his patronage the new faith flourished as it had never done before. Even after him Magadha continued to be the capital of a big empire till Pushyamitra Sunga defeated the last Maurya ruler (183 B.C.) and established the Sunga dynasty. The capital was now shifted to Malwa and the empire was reduced to a loose confederation in which the member states paid only normal homage to the centre and were constantly engaged in fighting one another. No lasting empire of the stature of the Maurya empire could be established during the period.

Towards the end of the Maurya empire the Greeks, who had been ruling small states in Bactria for a long time, invaded India from the north-west (190 B.C.) and established

their rule over the Indus valley and the Punjab and raided the neighbouring regions to the east. Once during the reign of Menander the raiders reached as far as Pataliputra. At first they were known as Yavanas and regarded as foreigners, but were finally assimilated into Hindu society as Kshatriyas. After the Greeks came the Scythians who were called Sakas in India and set up a state (90 B.C.) extending over the Punjab and Madhyadesh as far as Mathura. They were followed within a short time by the Pallavas whose name indicated their Persian origin. They became rulers of north-western India being, in their turn, displaced by the Kushans, of the Yu-chi tribe. The greatest of the Kushan rulers was Kanishka whose empire extended from Central Asia to Banaras and beyond. There is much difference of opinion about the date of the beginning of his rule. But most probably he ascended the throne in A.D. 78, which marks the commencement of the Saka era. Kanishka had embraced the Buddhist religion. He was the sponsor of a new interpretation of Buddha's teaching and the founding of a new sect called the Mahayana. This was the time when Gandhara art flourished. In Orissa about a hundred years before Kanishka, the great conqueror Kharavela, a patron of Jainism, had established a big empire, but it did not last long. About the same time the Andhras or Satavahanas founded on the ruins of the Mauryan empire an empire, of their own which continued for 400 years.

During these 800 years several new movements, religious and intellectual, arose in India creating storm and stress in the minds of the people and there was a danger that the foundation of national unity laid by the Vedic Hindu culture would be destroyed and the country would be divided into separate cultural zones with nothing common among them. But what actually happened was that this ferment proved to be very beneficial and enriched the Indian mind with a wealth of

new and profound ideas. Later, when attempts were made to bring about a synthesis in the various trends of thought, an imposing structure of a new common culture arose on a wider and stronger foundation.

* * *

In the latter part of the Vedic Hindu period, the religious life of the country had lost its balance. On the one hand popular religion had become a mere set of rites and sacrifices performed with the help of the Brahmins and on the other hand the teaching of the *Upanishads* had totally rejected all ritual and sacrifice and formulated a new system of Hindu religion based on an idealistic philosophy. This philosophical religion was interpreted by the higher classes who had the intellectual capacity to understand it, as an ascetic way of life and they generally lived like ascetics. The caste system had become so rigid that the lower classes of Hindu society were completely cut off from the higher classes and higher culture. So much so that they were forbidden to read the *Vedas*.

At this time (563 to 482 B.C.) came Gautama Buddha who protested against the ritualism of the masses and the asceticism of the higher classes, and most emphatically against racial prejudice and social discrimination. He delivered to the world his message of compassion, love, self-restraint and self-culture. The essence of Buddha's teaching is the sermon he gave in Banaras after his Enlightenment:

> "Listen ye Bhikshus! He who wants to renounce worldliness should avoid both excess and undue abstinence. On the one hand he should not be addicted to things which attract the mind merely through passion, especially through carnal desire. That is the low, vain and worthless life of ignorance fit for none but the blind worshipper of the world. On the other hand, he should not be given to self-mortification. That also is painful, ignoble and useless.

> There is ye Bhikshus a middle path between the two which the Tathagatha (Buddha) has found. The pursuit of this path opens the eyes and enlightens the mind. This is the way of peace of mind, higher wisdom, illumination and *nirvana*."

The Buddha looked deep into the human mind and examined the nature of the feeling of pain. He found the roots of the feeling in passions and desires and a sovereign remedy in self-culture, that is, making our thought and action subservient to a higher purpose by following a strict code of moral life, and a regimen of spiritual exercises. The higher purpose of life is the perfect peace of mind to which Buddha gave the name nirvana. He says: "One who attains freedom and peace through the realisation of truth enjoys perfect repose in his thought, word and action." In the famous Banaras sermon the Buddha goes on to speak of his tremendous experience, of the great truth revealed to him and of the pain of life—what it is, how it is born and how it ceases to be—and of the way of life which should be adopted to get rid of it. Here is the gist of the sermon.

> "This, ye Bhikshus, is the great truth of the right path by following which pain can be got rid of. It is the eightfold path. (1) right belief, (2) right aspirations, (3) right speech, (4) right conduct, (5) right mode of livelihood, (6) right mindedness, (7) right effort, (8) right rapture."

The Buddha showed the way to self-restraint instead of self-mortification, to right action instead of inactivity. What he specially emphasised was that giving up worldliness does not mean giving up the love and service of mankind. On the contrary universal love is essential for attaining peace of mind. This law of love he enunciates in the following words:

> "Hatred does not cease by meeting hatred with hatred but by meeting it with love. This is its nature. If one wants to live a happy life one should not hate one's enemies. Conquer resentment with love, evil with good, greed with generosity, and falsehood with truth!"

Gautama Buddha spent the rest of his life in traveling far and wide to preach his faith and after him his followers showed great zeal in the propagation of Buddhism. Still, during the first hundred years the number of his followers was very small and was confined to Koshala and Magadha. The rise of Buddhism began when Asoka embraced it and did his best to propagate it not only throughout India but also in foreign countries.

But owing to the comparatively rapid spread of Buddhism, its organisation could not maintain the compactness and coordination of the earlier days and the Buddhist community was divided into a number of sects. Of these the Hinayana was the older and perhaps more orthodox sect. Other sects, including the Mahayana with the greatest number of followers, had considerably deviated from the orthodox line. The Mahayana which under the patronage of Kanishka became very popular in India and abroad, believes in gods and regards the Buddha as the greatest of them, and worships them with elaborate ceremonies and rituals. Its emphasis is on devotion, prayer and charity instead of austere self-restraint and self-culture.

By the end of this period, Buddhism had lost some of its popularity in India firstly because the various sects wrangled and quarrelled among themselves, and secondly because the Buddhist Sangha received munificent donations, and the immense wealth which the Bhikshus possessed made them live a life of luxury and led to their moral degeneration.

About the same time as the Buddha was propagating his faith, Mahavira (522 B.C.–480 B.C.) was preaching a new religion which came to be known as Jainism. The gist of his teaching was that if a man is overcome by violent passions such as anger, self-conceit, greed or blind love, his soul is permeated by matter which binds it with fetters. Its liberation requires that no more matter be allowed to contaminate the soul and that which has already entered it should be completely eliminated.

There are three principles known as three jewels (*triratna*): right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. "Right knowledge consists in a correct understanding of the teachings of omniscient *tirthankaras* (makers of sacred paths). Right faith is the firm belief in the infallibility and competence of the teachers and right conduct consists of strict observance of charity, chastity, renunciation of all worldly interests, honourable conduct like not stealing, not uttering falsehood, and ahimsa or non-injury to life but positive kindness to all creation."

The Jains share with the Hindus the belief that the chain *karma* can be broken by vigorous ascetic discipline and advocate self-mortification, even suicide. The man who faithfully observes the principles known as the *triratna* becomes an *arhat* (a perfect one) and attains absolute knowledge and eternal bliss. The Jains do not believe in gods but their idea of an *arhat* is more or less the same as that of a god in Hinduism. They do not, however, regard the *arhats* as objects of devotion but as models of perfection. "They (the *arhats*) do not respond to prayers or lend a helping hand to the struggling spiritual aspirants and the best way of worshipping them is to follow their example and advice."

Like Buddhism, Jainism flourished for some time and then began to decline. But it was not uprooted from India as

it had tried to assimilate itself with Hinduism in many respects and came to he regarded as one of its heterodox sects.

The challenge of Buddhism and Jainism to the Vedic Hindu religion was a stimulating and refreshing inspiration to the minds of Hindu thinkers who now left the beaten track and ventured on new paths of speculation and reasoning.

Orthodox Hindus were still following the line laid down by the *Vedas*. Their practical religious life consisted of (a) the numerous rites and sacrifices performed under the direction of the Brahmins and (b) the duties prescribed for their particular caste under the caste system. For the performance of religious rites and duties, at first the *Sutras*, or gists of the commentaries on the *Vedas* written in short pithy sentences, served as guides. But later these brief hints were amplified in the *Dharmashastras*, or elaborate codes of ritual, prayer and moral conduct prepared in the light of the teachings of the *Vedas*. A separate manual of politics and economics, the *Arthashastra*, said to have been written by Chanakya or Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta Maurya was an achievement in the field of the theory of government and political institutions. The best known *Dharmashastra* is *Manusmriti* compiled by Manu, probably during the reign of the Sunga dynasty between 200 B.C. and 100 B.C.

Besides, philosophical thinkers made their own original speculation on metaphysical problems and founded their own systems known as the six systems of Hindu philosophy. Four of these, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika were not influenced by the *Vedas*. But the Purva Mimamsa and the Uttara Mimamsa were based on the teachings of the *Upanishads*.

Sankhya philosophy, like the *Upanishads*, rejects the rites and sacrifices introduced by the Brahmins and looks for some

other way to peace of mind and salvation. It regards both the body and the soul as real and does not believe in a universal being or God. According to it the soul, as long as it is associated with the body, is subject to passions and desires and afflicted with pain. Even after death the soul is not free but caught in the cycle of rebirth with the body. But if one realizes the true nature of the body and the soul one casts off the body and is free from pain.

Sankhya has a fairy high place in philosophical thought and contains valuable contributions to psychology and to the theory of knowledge. But as a code of life it could not make much progress as it had not shown a way to salvation which the common people could follow. This deficiency was made up later by Patanjali's Yoga.

From the theoretical point of view Patanjali's Yoga has no independent status but is the practical sequel to Sankhya philosophy. All ideas about psychology and the theory of knowledge found in Patanjali are taken from Sankhya philosophy. His aim, like that of Sankhya, is that the human soul should free itself from the bonds of nature, from its own body, from *karma* and *sansar* and attain the realisation of truth and the state of absolute peace of mind which he calls the Yoga. This can be attained by means of prayer and spiritual exercise. In the course of this spiritual training there comes a stage when the *yogi* acquires super-natural powers. He can find out all about the earth and the sky, the past and the future; he can make himself invisible; he can fly in the air and walk on water. But that is not what he is after. His object is to achieve complete detachment, perfect peace.

The Nyaya and Vaisheshika systems also pursue what may be called the common end of all Indian philosophical systems—the attainment of salvation through truth or the knowledge of reality. But in those two systems knowledge

does not mean intuitive but scientific knowledge based on observation, reasoning and experiment. Nyaya deals with *pramana* and *pramayya*, i.e. proof and that which is to be proved. The former comprises problems of logic and theory of knowledge and the latter physics. In all these sciences the Indian mind had achieved, about 2500 years ago, a profoundness and precision of thought of which there is no other example except in ancient Greece.

The remaining two systems of Hindu philosophy, i.e. Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa differ from the above four in that they derive their inspiration from the teachings of the *Vedas*. Purva Mimamsa believes that the Vedas are revealed and their injunctions must be obeyed. But it does not concern itself either with the theology or the ethics of the *Vedas* but only with the verses dealing with rites and ceremonies, sacrifices, hymns and prayers. This one-sided trend was probably a reaction against the religious philosophy of the time which had totally rejected all ritual and prayer. While the Purva Mimamsa has stressed one aspect of the teachings of the *Vedas* the Uttara Mimamsa has put emphasis on the other aspect, that is, on the doctrine of Unitism which it has developed into a coherent philosophy. Together, these two schools represent a religious philosophy which aims at vindicating the Vedic Hindu religion against Buddhism on the one hand and Jainism on the other.

But the highest achievement of the Hindu mind in this age shows itself in another philosophy expounded in the *Bhagwad Gita*. The *Gita* is not a separate book but a part of the epic *Mahabharata*.

Arjuna asks himself if it is not a sin to bring destruction on God's creatures and to slay his own kith and kin. On the one hand, his Kshatriya *dharma* urges him to do his duty and fight in order to uphold truth and justice and on the other

hand, love and fellow-feeling demand that he should not strike against his own brethren. So he is in great distress and does not know what to do. Sri Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, disguised as Arjuna's charioteer observes his spiritual predicament and comes to his rescue.

Arjuna's trouble is that his moral duty urges him to act but the consequences of this action seem to be entirely immoral. Sri Krishna resolves this difficulty on the basis of the philosophy of the *Upanishads*, and so he has to explain the fundamental principles of this philosophy. The gist of his argument is that to find the right way to moral action it is essential to base morality on religion. Every individual act has to be judged by the standards which religion has laid down. The religious ideal according to the *Upanishads* is the realisation of the unity of Being. It is not mere knowledge but complete absorption in the contemplation of Brahma till the illusion of duality is removed and the seeker and the sought become one. At this stage the whole nature of one's action changes. One performs the functions necessary for the preservation of one's own self and of society merely for duty's sake without any consideration for one's personal desire or the consequences of one's action. To Arjuna, Sri Krishna's advice is that he should discharge the duties laid down on him by the Kshatriya caste in a state of spiritual detachment without being swayed by desire, and not have the slightest concern with the consequences of his action. He should, in fact, get rid of the feeling that he is acting at all and regard all that is being done as the work of *Brahma*, the real agent. He should realise that his own action, like his existence as an individual, is mere appearance, a mere name.

The *Bhagwad Gita* is not only a commentary on but a supplement to the *Upanishads*. In the *Upanishads* the emphasis is on the theoretical aspect of religion, that is, on the nature

of *Brahma* and the *atma* and their identity; in the *Gita* on the practical approach, that is, on the way of the realisation of *Brahma* and the attainment of salvation. The *Gita* has tried to make a synthesis of three ways of attaining salvation—the way of knowledge through speculation and ascetic discipline, the way of faith and devotion, and the way of action. All the three have been mentioned in the *Upanishads* but so much stress has been laid on pure knowledge that the devotional aspect of religion is lost sight of and it looks as if realisation of the truth is something purely intellectual with no scope for love or devotion. Similarly, action is ranked inferior to knowledge. Apparently the *Upanishads* regard action of any kind as a chain impeding the progress of the seeker of truth which has to be broken before knowledge and salvation can be attained. The *Gita* has removed these misunderstandings and made it quite clear that the realisation of atma and Brahma emphasised in the Upanishads, is not mere abstract thought but a spiritual merging of the seeker into the sought involving love and devotion, and that action performed solely from a sense of duty is not an impediment but an effective means to this end.

Hindu thinkers seemed to be trying to reform Hinduism so as to invest it with the moral and spiritual strength to hold its own against Buddhism and regain the status of a national religion. This movement was not confined to religion and philosophy alone but penetrated below the intellectual level into the depths of feeling expressing itself in epic or heroic poetry. The stories of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* told in various folksongs had been current among the people for many generations. About the middle of this period in the second century B.C. they were compiled and reedited so that the memorable deeds of the heroes of the Vedic Hindu age may remind the people of their great past

and stir in their minds the desire for a new and better life. Strictly speaking the *Ramayana* is not a religious poem but may be regarded as the first specimen of secular poetry. But it presents the lofty characters of Rama, Lakshman and Sita in such an attractive and effective way that the readers are inspired with the deepest religious sentiments of love and devotion, and to them it is no less sacred than the holy books of the Hindu religion. On the other hand, the *Mahabharata* is, according to ancient tradition, a continuation of the *Yajur Veda* and calls itself the fifth *Veda* as well as a *Dharmashastra*. Religious significance, however, is attributed not to the story of the Kurus and the Pandavas but to those portions of the *Mahabharata* which deal with philosophical problems, especially to the famous discourse of Sri Krishna to which we have referred above.

Against this background of religious thought we have to look at the various aspects of the culture of an age in which religion was not merely a part of life but dominated the whole of it. Social and political organisations, the sciences, fine arts, mode of living, food and dress—everything was cast in the mould of religion.

Though the state was an autocratic one and in matters of administration the will of the raja was law, yet in judicial matters he had to follow the *Dharmashastras*. Generally Brahmins who were known for their learning and piety were employed as advisers to the raja and had a considerable say in matters of state. So it can be said that the state was to some extent subordinate to religion. But with the Buddhist state, at least in Asoka's time, the case was quite the reverse. The raja had come to be regarded as the religious head of the Buddhists. The Hindus enjoyed complete freedom of faith and worship. But as far as moral life was concerned, the state maintained a strict censorship over all its citizens, Hindus as

well as Buddhists, and special officers called Dhamma Mahamatras were appointed for the purpose. Apart from this, the general pattern of the state was the same as under Hindu rulers and its most prominent feature was that the raja ruled through a bureaucracy and an executive no less elaborate than we find in a modern state.

The change which Buddhism brought about in the social system was that, though caste distinctions did not disappear, they became less important.

The Buddhist Sangha opened its doors to all castes and thus the religious basis of *varnashram*, was weakened. In general social life the hierarchy of the caste system persisted even among the Buddhists and the Jains, but the order of gradation was changed to some extent. The nobles who belonged to the Kshatriya and the traders who belonged to the Vaishya castes were now regarded superior to the Brahmins.

Another important effect of the Buddist movement was that animal sacrifice, which Asoka had stopped during his reign, was given up forever by the great bulk of Hindu society. Only a small section of the population like the worshippers of Kali continued to observe it. The part played by Jainism in putting an end to animal sacrifice and meat-eating as well as in propagating the doctrine of *ahimsa* in Indian society was no less important than that of Buddhism.

The few sciences which were cultivated at this time had their roots in religion. Philosophy, as we have seen, was intimately connected with religion. Orthography, grammar and prosody had developed in the course of the study of the *Vedas* and were regarded as parts of Vedic lore. The old Indo-Aryan language, generally known as Vedic, was considerably changed and divided into several branches. One of these, current in the middle regions of north India, had developed on a logical pattern and was called Sanskrit. As the language of Hindu

religion and philosophy it was studied by the upper classes throughout India. Astrology, which had begun from the study of the movements of stars for determining the time of religious rites and sacrifices was the special preserve of Brahmins.

Buddhism exercised a great influence on education during this age. Before the Buddha the language of science and religion was Sanskrit. All the holy books were in Sanskrit and could be studied by none except the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Education, therefore, was confined exclusively to these high castes. The Buddha adopted for the propagation of his message the language of common intercourse instead of Sanskrit. In those days the language spoken in the homeland of the Buddha was the eastern dialect of Indo-Aryan. It was in this dialect that the Buddha preached. By the time of Asoka it had become the religious language of the Buddhists, and spread along with Buddhism throughout India. That is why Asoka used it in his edicts carved on pillars in different parts of the country. As far as knowledge is concerned, the Buddhists generally confined themselves to the study of religious lore. The field of learning continued to be under sway of the Brahmins throughout the period. So the various systems of philosophy, religious law, political economy and the masterpieces of epic poetry, to which we have referred above, were all works of Brahmin thinkers.

On the other hand, art flourished under Buddhist patronage. In the pre-Buddhist period fine arts were in a primitive stage. Architecture too had made little progress. Houses of one to four storeys were built of wood in cities situated on river-bank or sea-coast and of bricks in those on a higher altitude. They were provided with a large number of windows. Straw and bricks were used for ceilings. Each house had, as a rule, a square courtyard surrounded on all sides by rooms with verandas in front. The cities were generally

planned in the form of a square or a rectangle. The main street ran from east to west, side streets from north to south. A separate quarter was set apart for each of the various vocational groups. Temples were situated in the northern part of the city and in each of them there was a chamber of bamboo lattice-work which served as an altar. Even in cities where bricks were used for building houses, temples were generally made of bamboo. The oldest temple which has so far been traced is the Vishnu temple near Chittor. Another belonging to the same period has been found in Bes Nagar.

The use of stone in buildings had begun a little before Asoka's time. But it was he who built stone structures on a large scale. Of these, the royal places have been destroyed by the ravages of time. But some *stupas*, pillars and *viharas* (monasteries) are still extant. Specimens of *stupas* can be seen in Sanchi and Barhut. The carvings of their fences and gates deal not with religious but with secular aspects, and present vivid pictures of life in that period. The Asoka pillars cut out of solid stone are from 40 to 60 feet high with a polished surface shining like a mirror. In the upper part there are on a square base a bell-shaped crenate capital and some particular symbolic figures, generally that of a lion. The most famous of them is the pillar in Sarnath near Banaras with four stately lion-figures bearing the Dharmachakra. It is these lions and the sacred wheel that have been adopted as the official emblem of the Indian Republic.

The flower of Buddhist art is seen in the caves of Ajanta and their frescoes. These paintings executed from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D. present the characteristics of Buddhist art at its best. The first thing to be noticed is that from the point of view of artistic skill and technical perfection, the Ajanta painting had reached such a high standard that it must be regarded as the result of development over

centuries. This can only be explained by linking the Ajanta art through the Dravidian culture of south India, with the Indus Valley civilisation because the Vedic culture which was the precursor of the Buddhist culture in north India, is not known to have had any painting worth the name.

This hypothesis would account for the fact that these frescoes give as prominent a place to non-Aryan figures like the Nagars, as to the Aryan ones. Another characteristic of these paintings, as of all Buddhist art, is simplicity and restraint that is, the avoidance of elaborate decoration and ornamentation as well as that of excessive emotion, which can be regarded as the direct influence of the Buddha's teachings. At the same time the charming Bodhisatva Padampani shows that Buddhist art combined a deep spirituality and inwardness with the capacity to take delight in physical beauty and grace.

Chapter VI



The Second Confluence Puranic Hindu Culture (A.D. 200—A.D. 700)

In the foregoing period two new religious movements arose as rivals to the orthodox Hindu religion and were for some time very popular in certain parts of the country. But by the second century B.C. their influence began to decline. On the other hand, Hindu thinkers, in search of truth, ventured on new avenues of speculation and made a careful study of the spiritual temper of their countrymen with a view to reforming religious faith and practice in manner calculated to attract all classes of the people. The result was that Hinduism, with fresh lease of life and vigour, regained its hold over the people and served as the foundation of a new national culture. This new culture which had begun to develop about 200 B.C. reached its highest level in the fourth century under the Gupta emperors.

Though several empires emerged in north and south India after that of the Mauryas, none of them was big enough to deserve the name of the national empire. Finally in the beginning of the fourth century A.D. another Chandragupta (A.D. 320 to A.D. 335) a rose from the land which had given birth to the founder of the Mauryan empire and made

Patliputra the capital of another fairly big empire which under his son Samudragupta and his grandson Chandragupta II held the whole of India, except a small part of the south, under its sway. The political unity enjoyed by the country under the Guptas, helped in creating an atmosphere of cultural unity and in elevating the new Hindu culture to the position of the national culture. In the following pages we will try to give a brief survey of this new culture.

The Vedic Hindu religion had already included Shiva and Vishnu, the most popular gods of old Indian people, among the Vedic pantheon, identifying Shiva with the Aryan god Rudra and Vishnu with Surya. But belief in these gods was only a minor point in the Vedic Hindu creed and was not fully assimilated in it. The new form of Hinduism realised the full importance of this old belief and after reconciling it with unitarianism, made it an essential part of its religious faith.

The religious consciousness of the old India people was still in a stage where they regarded the various forces of nature as living gods and goddesses possessing will and power. They visualised them in human form, and made their images and worshipped them. Their powerful and unrestrained imagination had conceived the origin and growth of the universe and the relations between the various natural phenomena in the form of myths about gods. In some parts of the country the greatest homage was paid to the god of reproduction Shiva and his consort Parvati, who was probably the same as the mother-goddess worshipped several thousand years earlier in the valley of the Indus. In other parts Vishnu, the god of livelihood, and his wife Lakshmi were the special objects of veneration. As sexual reproduction is the root of the life as well as of death, Shiva was believed to have a dual personality. On one side he was regarded as the ruler of the universe,

and on the other, as its destroyer. Similarly his consort was regarded as a gracious mother under the name of Uma and Parvati and as a ferocious power under the name of Kali whom nothing could appease except a blood sacrifice. But Vishnu had a single aspect. He was the preserver of the world, merciful towards men and provided of their welfare. His wife Lakshmi was the goddess of wealth and plenty.

The idea of the multiplicity of gods was reconciled with the Vedic concept of unity with the help of the theory of symbol and incarnation. The religious dogma took the following form. The living soul of the universe is the one and only being called Brahman. We can conceive his in three ways: as Brahma, the creator; as Vishnu, the preserver; and as Shiva, the destroyer. All these three as well as other gods and goddesses and their representations are the symbols of the various modes and qualities of the one God and to worship them means really to worship Brahman. Vishnu comes to the world again and again for the help and salvation of men.

The human form assumed by a god is called his incarnation. Nine incarnations of Vishnu have already come, the most important of them being Krishna, Rama, and the Buddha.

After revising the belief in gods in such a way as to accommodate all sects and all classes, the stories current among the people about the creation of the world, the life of gods and the rule of kings were collected and compiled under the title of *Purana.* Most of the *Puranas* are named after Vishnu and some after Brahma or Shiva. Such compilations were known to the Hindus from the earliest times. The *Ithihasa Puranas* is mentioned in the *Atharva Veda* and is regarded by some as a part of Vedic literature. But most of the *Puranas* were compiled in their present form in the fifth century A.D. and in the status of holy books. The *Puranas* were far more

popular among the common people than the Vedas. So the new Hinduism, in order to distinguish it form the old, can be called the Puranic Hindu religion and the culture founded upon it as the Puranic culture.

The Puranic Hindu religion had, as we have said before, an outlook broad enough to accommodate all varieties of belief existing in India, from animism and image-worship to Unitism. But those religious doctrines which were directly concerned with social and moral life, i.e. *karma*, *punarjanma*, the four stages of life and *varnasham* were taken bodily form the Vedic Hind religion.

Another thing common to both was the interpretation of the *Vedas* and *Aranyakas* and of the laws laid down in the *Dharmashastras*, as well as the direction of the elaborate rites which a Hindu had to perform from birth to death, which was the privilege of the Brahmins. So the Brahmins had complete control over the religious and social life of the people.

So the founder of the Puranic Hindu religion, who had an understanding of the condition of their time and an insight into the Indian mind, made the Hindu religion so elastic as to accommodate all the religious trends of that age. Equally broad-based and comprehensive was the culture build on this foundation. But in spite of all this, caste distinctions became more rigid because in this loose structure of Puranic religion and culture, the real binding force was provided by the Brahmins and their power and influence depended on the caste system. With all their influence over religion and social life, the Brahmins had little hand in administration or government. As *purohits* their main duty was to preside over the observance of religious rites. So the Hindu state though still a religious state in the sense that it was its duty to partonise Hindu religion and to enforce the religious laws, was practically free from the interference of the priestly caste, and

the process of its secularisation had begun. Though the *Dharmashastras* had the status of civil and social laws, yet, since the time of Manu human reason and social custom were also recognised as sources of law. The state, therefore, has the right of making secular laws and it followed the principle that, along with the common cultural and social life which the Hindu religion wanted to promote throughout the country, the various regional cultures and social institutions should also be recognised and given the same legal status as the dominant strand of Hindu culture.

Intermarriage between castes had produced various new mixed sub-castes. Even the four original castes were now being divided into similar groups. The Vaishya caste specially had split on the occupational basis into many sub-castes such as Vaidya, Kayastha, etc.

Women had a high status in society but they were not allowed to step outside their prescribed range of duties.

A brief survey of different cultures shows the general condition created by the Puranic Hindu religion. But we must remember that in some parts of the country, specially in south India, there were large groups who even after adopting the religious tenets of Puranic Hinduism stuck to their own cultures–each with a separate language and to some extent separate way of living, separate customs, manners and laws. So much so that in the south some Dravidian communities lived under a matriarchal system radically different from the patriarchal system of the Hindu religion.

Though in the Puranic age religion continued to dominate society, the process of differentiation of the various departments of life became more pronounced. Science, literature and the fine arts were now free to move outside the narrow circle of religious subjects and to deal with all departments of life. Thanks to the patronage of the Gupta court,

secular literature made remarkable progress and could compare favourably with the classical literature of any other language in the world.

The progress of science and literature was accelerated by the increasing use of books. For centuries India had known the art of writing in the Kharoshti and Brahmi scripts. In north India the barks of some trees and in south India palm leave of various kinds were used for writing.

Sanskrit had regained its position as the language of religion, science and literature. For higher learning there were universities at Nalanda and other places at which students were given religious and secular education at the expense of the state. Among secular sciences, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy were regarded to be the most important in this period. Along with medicines, students also learnt surgery. They were taught to use the lancet for surgical operations, to clean and dry wounds and to apply salves. The mathematicians of the age were familiar with the Pythagorean theorem, could find the value of π and solve problems involving equations. The astronomers had discovered that the stars and planets were spherical and reflected light. They knew that he earth turned round its axis once in a day and they had calculated its radius.

The great scholars of this period occupy a high place in the history of science not only of India but of the whole world. The researches of Aryabhatta, Varahamihira and Brahmagupta in mathematics and astronomy, of Charaka and Susruta in medicine, guided scientists in other lands for centuries and exercised a direct influence on scientific thought of Arab and other Islamic counties and, indirectly, on Europe.

The branch of literature which made the most remarkable progress during this period was drama. Bhasa was

probably the first dramatist to distinguish himself in the field of court drama or secular drama. He was the predecessor of Kalidas who live in the fourth or the fifth century B.C.. Kalidasa is unanimously acknowledged to be the king of Indian dramatists and poets. There is a difference of opinion about his birth-place but all agree that he passed the greater part of his life at the court of the Gupta raja. The best known and the most highly esteemed of his dramatic works is *Shakuntala*, which is regarded to be a mirror of the mixed classic-romantic spirit of the puranic period. The poetry and drama of this period retained something of the realistic simplicity of the purely classical poetry of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, but at the same time the powerful imagination and passionate sensuousness of the age invested it with a lyrical romanticism. At the end of the seventh century appeared another great dramatist, Bhavabhuti whom literary critics place in the same class of Kalidas. His three plays, *Malatimadhava*, *Mahavircharita* and *Uttararamacharita* are regarded to be memorable works of the golden age of Sanskrit literature.

In epic poetry, as in drama, the Indian mind reached the heights of perfection during his period. For that also the credit goes to Kalidasa. His two epics, *Raghuvamsa* and *Kumarasambhava*, and the little lyrical poem *Meghaduta*, are counted among the masterpieces of world literature. Bharavi was almost a contemporary of Kalidasa. Only one epic of his *Kiratarjunia*, had come down to us but it is regarded to the most powerful poem in the Sanskrit language. In the seventh century Bhartihari was unrivalled in his own field. He is famous for the little gems of poetry called *shatakas* which show great depth of conception and artistic skill.

Chapter VII



New Winds and New Currents
Islam in the South, Advaita, Bhakti and Rajput Culture
(A.D. 700—A.D. 1000)

The 300 years after Harsha were a period of political disintegration and intellectual stagnation. The country was divided into numerous tiny states which limited the view of the people living in them to their own little words and the sense of national unity was almost completely lost. Religious and intellectual life was dominated by formalism and authoritarianism. The two sects of Puranic Hinduism worshipping Shiva and Vishnu had developed into two separate religions. There was religious consciousness in abundance but it had no freshness or depth. Writings on religion were confined to supplements to the *Puranas* or duplications of the old *smritis.* The ideas were marred by a blind imitation of thinkers of the past and the manner of writing was cramped by strict adherence to hard and fast rules of grammar and rhetoric. This was also true of drama, poetry and other branches of literature. All the juice was pressed out of them by vigours of technique. Far greater than creative literature was the bulk of books on prosody and the technique of writing. Commentaries on old works were written in large numbers in strict accordance with the elaborate rules laid down for the commentators.

This degeneration dates from the time when the invading Shakas, Hunas and Gurjars put an end to the Gupta empire and settled in India. By the end of the eleventh century these adventurous warlike tribes, full of freshness and vigour, had spread throughout India and set up many small states of their own on the ruins of the older and larger ones. But it seems that shortly after these nomads came to India, they were attracted by the superior cultural life they found here and gradually adopted Hindu religion and culture. In order to acquire a higher status in Hindu society they claimed to be the descendants of old Kshatriya heroes and began to call themselves as Rajputs.

These Rajputs infused fresh blood into the enervated body of Hindu society and created a stir and movement in its stagnant intellectual and cultural life. The Rajput courts became centers of art, literature, poetry and drama. Specially Raja Bhoj of Malwa (A.D. 1018–1055), known as the second Vikramaditya, revived the memory of the Gupta emperors through his patronage of art and learning. Before him Raja Mahindrapal of Kanauj was the patron of the noted dramatist Shekhar. Towards the end of the period Raja Lakshman Sen of Bengal distinguished himself for his promotion of poetry and literature as the patron of Jaydeva, the author of the *Gita Govinda*.

In the eleventh century this renaissance of learning and literature reached Kashmir. Somdeva translated an old collection of south Indian tales into Sanskrit under the title of *Kathasaritsagara* and Kalhana wrote his *Rajtarangani* a history of Kashmir in verse which is regarded as an outstanding work of literature as well as history. Later, when Sanskrit lost its hold over the minds of the people and the regional languages began to attract attention, they received great encouragement in the Rajput courts. So the first book of

poetry in Dingal Hindi, *Prithvi Raja Raso* was written at the instance of the Chauhan Raja of Ajmer. It is popularly believed to be the work of his court poet Chandra Bardai but some scholars think that it is a collection of songs composed by different bards. Architecture too, made great progress under the Rajput courts. The forts of Chittor, Ranthambor, Mandu and Gwalior and the temples in Khajuraho (Bundelkhand) and Bhuvaneshwar bear witness to their glory. But the culture which flourished during the Rajput period was the culture of a warlike people in an age of chivalry. From the individual point of view it appears to be full of romance and poetry, but from the point of view of national unity and collective welfare it present a depressing picture. So obsessed were the Rajputs with tribal consciousness that they seemed to have lost even a sense of solidarity of class or caste, to say nothing of the sense of national unity. A similar spirit pervaded the whole society. Each of the four castes was now divided into many sub-castes which claimed the entire loyalty of the individual. The very idea of nationhood had completely disappeared.

South India during this time remained free both from the evils of over-civilisation and from the disastrous effects of foreign invasions. It, therefore, did not fall a prey to political disintegration like the north. The vast peninsula comprising the states of Kerala and Pandya, enjoyed political stability throughout these three centuries. At the end of this period there was, whoever, a change but it was a change for the better because it turned south India, into one political unit. In A.D. 1005 the Chola ruler Rajaraja made himself master of son Rajendra Chola further increased his domination by annexing the region along the Bay of Bengal.

Favourable conditions in the south saved intellectual life form the stagnation which had come over it in the north.

Here the period is marked by a remarkable movement and activity in religious thought. In the seventh century A.D. two order of Shaivite and Vishnavite saint inspired by the zeal of their religious passion, had rendered the teachings of the *Puranas* into Tamil verse to propagate a cult of love and devotion which was later called Bhakti. Of these mystic poets the votaries of Shiva were known as Adyars and those of Vishnu as Alwars. The Alwars played an important role in making the Hindu religion a living experience for the common people in the south. Their ideas were mostly taken from the *Vishnu Purana*, *Bhagwad Gita* and other books of sacred Hindu literature. Their profound passion and poetic genius gave Vishnu Bhakti the status of an independent religion which had far greater attraction for the common people than its rivals Shaivism, Buddhism and Jainism. Another great religious movement which arose in the south was that of Shankaracharya who revived the Vedantic religion through his *Commentary on the Uttara Mimamsa*. The gist of his teachings was that all the holy books of the Hindu express the same truth, i.e. the creed of Unitism in different ways. According to Shankaracharya, God is the one and only being. Nothing exists except Him. He is *nirguna*, i.e. free from all attributes. All except God, that appears to exist is mere illusion (*maya*). As long as man suffers from ignorance, he has to believe that the world of appearance (*maya*) is real and to act in practical life according to this hypothesis. But for he one who knows and wants to attain ultimate salvation (*moksha*) it is necessary to lift the veil of ignorance and have a vision of real unity, which cannot be achieved until, through a course of spiritual exercises, the senses and usual perceptions have been suspended and the person reaches a mystical state.

Shankaracharya's philosophy, which is known as *Advaita*, is well-reasoned and complete interpretation of the Hindu

way of knowledge. The way of devotion or *Bhakti yoga* was represented during the lifetime of Shankaracharya by the Alwar and Adyar poets. Later, in the tenth and eleventh centuries several Shaivite and *Vaishnavite acharyas* tried to put the idea of Bhakti on a philosophical basis. Of these we will mention Ramanuja who raised the cult of Bhakti to the level of an independent religion and helped it to conquer the minds of the *people* throughout India from the south to the north.

Ramanuja based his teachings like Shankaracharya on the Vedanta, the philosophy of the *Upanishads*. But he interpreted it in an entirely different way. He too believes God to be the one and only being but he invests Him with attributes. God is the master of all (*Iswara*) and destroyer of the world. He created out of Himself matter (*prakriti*) and sprit (*jiva*) but it did not make the least difference to the integrity of His being. Matter and spirit have both a degree of reality but their existence is not independent of God. They are merely accidents of His Being and subservient to His will. The human soul after passing through the intermediate stages of action (*karma*) and knowledge (*jnana*) reaches the ultimate stage of being in the presence of the beloved and attains *moksha*.

The way of Advaita shown by Shankaracharya and that of Bhakti initiate by the Alwar poets appear to be new movements in the religious history of India. When we consider the origins of these movements we find that they were based on old religious ideas which the changing social and political conditions helped to revive. In explaining why this revival took place in south India at this particular time, one has to accept the hypothesis that it was partly due to some foreign cultural influence. Some historians think this foreign influence was of Nestorian Christianity which had prevailed in

south India for a long time. But Dr Tarachand in his valuable book *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* has proved that these movements were inspired by the impact of Islam. The contact of Muslim Arabs with south India had already begun in the latter part of the preceding period. Trade relations between Arabia and south India had already begun in the latter part of the preceding period. Trade relations between Arabia and south India had existed for many centuries before the emergence of Islam. But in the seventh century when Islam infused the Arabia and south India had existed for many centuries before the emergence of Islam. But in the seventh century when Islam infuse the Arabs with a new sprit of adventure and enterprise, their foreign trade increased by leaps and bounds and the conquest of Iran gave them the monopoly of India-Iranian maritime trade. Soon they had their settlements in Sri Lanka and on the coast of Malabar. Since they had come as peaceful traders they were welcomed by the Hindu Rajas and their subjects, and were given full freedom not only to profess and practise their religion but also to preach and propagate it and they made full use of their freedom. No wonder that their zeal rekindled in the minds of their Hindu neighbours the dormant divine fire and caused a stir in their religious life.

About the same time Arab Muslims came to Sind and established their rule over the region. In the beginning of the eighth century A.D. the ruler of Sri Lanka sent the orphan daughter of some immigrants Arabs who had died to Hajjaj Ibn-e-Yusuf, governor of Hedjaz. The ships on which they were sailing were attacked by some pirates from Kutch who seized the girls and took them away. Hijjaj urged 'Dahar', the raja of Sind to set the captives free. But the latter ignored him. It was to punish him for this that an expedition was sent in A.D. 712. It was Mohammad-ibne-Qasim who

conquered Sind and Multan and annexed them to the Islamic *Khilafat*.

Sind acknowledged the suzerainty of the *Khilafat* till A.D. 861. After that several small independent states were set up under Muslim rulers. Outside Muslim territory a large number of Arab traders had settled in Hindu states on the coastal region from Sind to Gujarat and Kathiawar.

We know something about the influence which the contact of Hindu and Muslims in western India had on the Muslim culture in Arabia. We know that during the reign of Khalifa Mansur (A.D. 757–A.D. 774) Hindu scholar came to Baghdad and brought with them Brahmagupta's *Brahmasiddhanta* and *Khandkhadayaka* which Al-fazari translated into Arabic with the help of these pundits. Later in the time of Harun thanks to the liberalism and generosity of his Barmecide ministers many books were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic. The Barmecide sent Arab scholars to India to study medicine and called Hindu physicians to Baghdad to act as superintendents of hospitals and to translate a number of books on medicine, philosophy, astronomy and astrology into Arabic. Al-Fihrist mentions a philosophical work by Bedba. This according to Professor Sachau, was the *Vedanta Sutra* of Badarayana Vyasa. As long as Sind was under the Abhasides the work of translation from Sanskrit into Arabic continued.

But the cultural influence exercised by the Muslims over Sind and Gujarat during this period has not yet fully come to light. In any case, Muslim influence on Indian culture in the south and west was limited and indirect. It was in the north, where the long series of invasions by Muslim Turks started in the tenth century and continued till the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the beginning of the thirteenth century, that Muslim culture had profound and direct influence

on every department of Indian life. In the next chapter we shall see where this Muslim culture had its origin, how it came to India and what role it played in the shaping of the cultural life of the country.

Chapter VIII



Muslim Culture Before it came to India

Islam as the Basis of Muslim Culture

The birthplace of Islam, Arabia, is a part of the bigger geographical region which is almost entirely surrounded by the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. This region occupied a central position in the old world and was the meeting point of three continents. It was here that several great cultures arose and others, born in Asia, Africa or Europe, came in contact with one another. During the period when almost the whole trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean was carried by a land route, Syria, Palestine, Hedjaz and Yemen lay on this great road joining the East with the West. If there was a place in the old world where the idea of a universal human brotherhood could take shape it was this central region.

Islam, the new message of hope and faith which the Prophet of Arabia gave to the world, does not claim to be a new religion. It sets out merely to reiterate in a more complete form the eternal truth which the chosen messengers of God have been revealing to various peoples of the world from time to time. To explain this point the *Quran* uses the terms *Din* and *Shariah*. *Din* is the religious and moral ideal common to all religions but in which the Semitic religions are explicitly named, the others being referred to by implication.

Shariah is the positive law through which a particular religion realises at a given time the common eternal ideal. *Din* has always been the same and will continue to be the same. But *Shariahs* have been different for different peoples at different times. Islam as *Din* recognises and confirms the eternal truth taught by all religions. But the Islamic *Shariah* cancels all previous *Shariahs*. The original source of the teachings of Islam is the *Quran* which was revealed to the holy Prophet Mohammed. The traditions of the Prophet are regarded by most Muslims as a second authentic source.

The two fundamental religious concepts developed by the *Quran* are:

1. The concept of God, which is inferred from that of the universe.
2. The concept of the relation between man and God which determines the relations of men among themselves and their rights and duties as individuals and members of society.

An 'insight' into the universe reveals to man order and harmony, purpose and design, pointing to the wisdom and providence of the Creator. The object for which He created the world is known to Him alone but its design provides for its conservation and shows proportion, beauty and justice leading us to the concept of a creator (*Khaliq*) and preserver (*Rab*) who is gracious and merciful (*Rahman* and *Rahim*)

The universe is subject to the law of causality; so is human action. Every action of man has a fixed recompense (*Jaza*) which he usually gets in this life. When the world comes to an end, there will be a day of judgement (*Yaum-ud-Din*) when men's whole lives will be weighed in the balance and lasting rewards and retributions will be announced.

So we see that the concept of the attributes of God in the *Quran* is associated with a particular concept of the world

(*Weltanschauung*). The *Quran* visualises the world as one of reward and retribution which is based on justice tempered with mercy. But the life of man does not end with his departure from this world. There is another world where he will get the final reward or retribution for the sum total of his actions.

Contrary to the attitude taken by many other religions, Islam does not deprecate the value of this world and this life. As the 'field of action' and the 'farming-ground for the world to come' the present world is of great importance and value to man. As to the degree of reality the world possesses, from the point of view of absolute existence it does not interest the *Quran*. What it emphasises is that from the relative point of view of man the world has as much reality as he himself. For all practical purposes both are real. This affirmation of life and of the physical world is peculiar to Islam.

As we have seen, this concept of the world implies that its creator is the one Supreme Being, the Preserver, the Gracious and Merciful. These are the basic attributes of God from which many others are derived.

The *Quran* has dealt with the attributes of God definitely and comprehensively but it observes the greatest caution in discussing His Essential Being. The question of the essential nature of God and the world is the most delicate in speculative philosophy. Not only in theology but also in metaphysics, the concept of essence is generally more negative than positive. The *Quran* confines itself to emphasising the unity of God and His freedom from all conditions. The positive aspect of His nature is not discussed at all.

Very great stress is laid on the unity of God in the *Quran*. It forbids the sharing of any of God's attributes, let alone His Essential Being, in thought or speech. But as far as freedom from conditions is concerned, the *Quran* follows a middle

path. It speaks of God being free from corporality and other conditions to which finite things are subject, but does not carry the idea of the Unconditioned to such an extreme as to make it impossible for the limited human intellect to have any idea of God at all. It ascribes to God positive attributes but warns against thinking of these attributes as resembling human qualities. One is constrained to use the same words for Divine attributes as for human qualities, but it should always be borne in mind that the former are essentially different from the latter.

The love of and devotion to the Supreme One is the first and foremost duty of the believer. To induce the purity of heart and concentration of mind indispensable for true devotion the simple means of prayer, fasting and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) have been prescribed. Real devotion, however, is not mere ritual but obedience to the will of God, following the Moral Law laid down by Him, identifying oneself with the purpose which He has assigned to the universe. This unconditional submission to the will of God is Islam in its literal as well as theological sense. This brings the life of man in harmony with the law of the universe which is the law of man's own nature.

The other implication of the unity of God which has been specially emphasised is that 'devotion' or unconditional submission should be offered to none but God and help should be sought from none but Him because He alone is worthy of devotion and He alone can help in the moment of need. For a man to submit unconditionally to or place unreserved trust in the help of a fellowman or any other finite being is to lose his human dignity, the worse sin in the Islamic *Shariah*.

Some other corollaries follow from the doctrine of unity which are regarded as fundamentally important in Islam. The unity of the creator implies that of creation, leading to the

idea that human society is like an organism whose members are bound to one another with vital ties. This is the basis of the concept of the universal brotherhood of man. The *Quran* regards man and woman, master and servant, the rich and the poor as fundamentally equal. No person is superior to another in respect of sex or race or colour or class or vocation. There is only one basis of distinction—*Taqwa*, i.e. the fear of God, obedience to His law, service to Him and His creatures. The freedom and dignity of the individual is an important aspect of equality and the *Quran* has recognised the independent position and value of the individual. Every person has a direct relation to God. There is no intermediary between them. The Prophet is a leader or teacher, who through his precept and example shows the way to establish and maintain the proper relation to God. His is the perfectly developed personality which, according to the behest of the *Quran*, 'model your character on that of God', has succeeded in embodying in itself the human counterpart of Divine attributes and serves as an ideal to be followed by every person. But the individuality which the *Quran* wants everybody to develop has to be harmonised with collective life. The moral development and the spiritual perfection of the individual is possible only in *society*. The ascetic life of the recluse, which keeps him away from his fellow-beings, is completely rejected by the *Quran* which attaches such importance to the development of social spirit that it makes fundamental religious functions like prayers and the *Hajj* congregational, and gives priority to the duties which a man owes to his fellowmen over those he owes to God.

The concept of this Islamic state in the *Quran* is that sovereignty really vests in God. He delegates it to the Prophet and from the Prophet it passes on to the *Khalifa* or Imam. About the manner in which sovereignty is delegated to the

Khalifa, there is a difference of opinion among interpreters of the *Quran*. One school believes that the *Khalifa*, like the Prophet, is appointed by God; but the majority of Muslims think that anybody who is accepted by the general will of the Muslim citizens of a state through oath of allegiance becomes a rightful *Khalifa*.

As far as legislation is concerned, the fundamental principles of the law (*Shariah*) which should govern the Islamic state have been laid down by the *Quran*. The Prophet, by applying them to the Arab society of his time, formulated the first positive law of Islam. For the future the interpretation of Islamic law according to changing conditions was left to *Mujtahids* or competent scholars who are well versed in the *Quran* and the *Hadith* (the sources of the Islamic Shariah), as well as in the general learning of their age.

Under this theocratic state the *Quran* wants to build a society based on equality and fraternity, free from bonds of race or country or class, which affords to each of its members, within the limits of the Shariah and of collective welfare, full freedom for realising the greatest possible measure of material and spiritual values.

Collective welfare is the key to the attitude taken by the *Quran* towards political, social as well as other aspects of cultural life. In the economic field private property is recognised, but special care is taken to prevent the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few. *Khums* and *zakat* (forms of capital levy) which every Muslim is expected to pay and the law of inheritance, have been designed with this end in view. Private ownership of land (which in those days was the only source of production of wealth) was made subject to so many limitations that it was no more than a nominal ownership. Of the three forms of exploitation, which existed at the time, slavery, usury and cornering, the last two were practically

abolished. Slavery was modified to a system of attaching prisoners of war to families as covenanted servants, with rights as well as duties, till they earned their freedom (though in the latter period of general degeneration the system lapsed into naked slavery). Usury and cornering were strictly prohibited. In short, Islam tried to stop exploitation not through mere exhortation but by law, thus setting an example of state control of economic life. Art and literature were also made subject to the larger interests of collective life; the unbridled, aimless phantasy of poets is condemned by the *Quran*, but creative, stimulating and exalting poetry is encouraged. The Prophet and his successors condemned those verses of pre-Islamic Arab poets which were obscene and full of a barbarous, revengeful sentiments, but expressed their appreciation of more healthy romantic and heroic pre-Islamic poems which were among the finest examples of simple and effective verse. In music, stirring and inspiring tunes were preferred to depressing and doleful ones. In painting and sculpture images of living beings were forbidden on account of their association with idolatory and the danger that images of revered leaders (for example those of the Prophet) may come to be worshipped like idols.

The Islamic State and the Muslim State

For a long time Muslim culture developed under a central theocratic state or *Khilafat* which passed through the following three phases:

a. The rule of the Prophet and his four Righteous *Khalifas*.
b. The *Khilafat* of Banu Omayyah.
c. The *Khilafat* of Banu Abbas.

According to Muslim historians, the first saw the complete realisation of the Islamic concept of society—a society

harmonising religious and secular life, reconciling the interests of the rulers with those of the ruled, a society free from all distinctions of race, colour, class and country. In the second phase Islamic society maintained a superficial unity but forces of disintegration began to work under the surface. Banu Omayyah set up a dynastic monarchy thus creating a gulf between the rulers and the ruled, the state and its citizens and, what proved to be more disastrous, between the Arabs and the non-Arabs. The luxurious life of the court and increased prosperity began to have an adverse effect on the life of Muslim Arabs but on the whole they retained their enterprise and continued to serve their state as brave soldiers and their religion as zealous missionaries. The third phase opened with an aggravation of disintegrating factors because the Abbasi *Khilafat* gave up all pretence of ruling in the spirit of democracy. Pomp and grandeur and the personal authority of the *Khalifa* increased to such an extent that the only difference between him and an absolute monarch in a secular state was that he had to follow to a certain extent the Islamic law in the administration of justice. The first few Abbasi *Khalifas* managed to retain some measure of popularity on account of their personal qualities, but their incapable and weak successors lost the support of their Muslim subjects. Now the separation between society and state, between the *Khalifa* and the community was complete. He ruled with the help of his army, not with the goodwill of the people. The suppression of the democratic principle of liberty and equality on which the *Khilafat* had been founded by the Prophet and his immediate successors inevitably resulted in the break-up of this great structure. Spain and Egypt were the first to become independent; others followed. The separatist tendency in the political field was reflected in cultural life. From the middle of the thirteenth century the common or international ele-

ment in the cultural life of the Muslim countries became gradually weaker and the national or local element grew stronger. So the Islamic State and Islamic Culture in the strict sense lasted only for about half a century under the Prophet and the four Righteous *Khalifas*. The *Khilafat* under Banu Omayyah and more definitely under Banu Abbas was only partly Islamic in its political and cultural pattern. The so-called Muslim states which appeared after the dissolution of the Abbasi *Khilafat* in the middle of the thirteenth century were either dynastic states of Muslim rulers or national states of Muslim peoples and did not have in them the political or cultural spirit of Islam.

Chapter IX



The Contact between Hindu Culture and Muslim Culture in India

As already noted, the Muslims first came to India as invaders in A.D. 712 and established their rule over Sind and Multan. As traders they had probably started coming to south India much earlier. From the eighth century they began to settle along the sea-coast from Sind to Kathiawar and Gujarat. So in a way, the contact between Islamic culture and Hindu culture had already begun in the eighth century. Reference has been made to the books of Hindu scholars on medicine, mathematics and astronomy, which went from Sind to Arabia and helped in the intellectual development of the Muslims. The impetus which the Bhakti movement among the Hindus received from Muslim ideas has also been mentioned. There are some indications of the influence of the dress, customs and manners of the Arab Muslims on the people in south India but as a scientific investigation of this has not yet been made we cannot venture any positive assertion on the point.

But by the end of the tenth century the Muslims had only touched the periphery of Hindu culture; they were yet far from its centre. The real contact between Hindu and Muslim culture began not even with the occupation of the Punjab and Multan by the Ghaznavides in the eleventh cen-

tury, but with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. The invasions of north India by the Muslim began from Ghazni—the capital of a state corresponding to the bulk of what is now called Afghanistan—together with a part of Iran. This was one of the large states set up by adventurous Turkish chiefs after the power of Abbasi *Khilafat* had begun to decline. The first invasion of the Punjab was made by Subuktagin in 986-987. His son, Mahmud, carried on wars of pillage and conquest throughout his reign and succeeded in establishing Ghaznavi rule which lasted for about 150 years over Peshawar and a large part of western Punjab. In 1170 Muhammad Ghori, who had wrested the 'Empire of Ghazni' from the Ghaznavi dynasty opened a new campaign in a bid to extend his territory in India. After suffering one crushing defeat he and his general, Qutubuddin Aibak, exploited the dissensions among the Rajput princes and succeeded in conquering a considerable part of northern India. When Muhammad Ghori died, Qutubuddin Aibak became the independent ruler of the kingdom in India, which came to be known as the Sultanate of Delhi. This was in A.D. 1206.

The Delhi Sultanate was ruled by several Muslim dynasties one after another for about 300 years though its extent varied from almost the whole of India under Alauddin Khilji to a very small area surrounding the city of Delhi under the Syeds.

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate was an epoch-making event in the history of India. For the first time in 500 years after the death of Harsha, India now had a fair degree of political unity. Though the new rulers were foreigners they made India their home. Had they been cut off for a long time from the land of their origin and its culture like the Greeks who came from Bactria in the second century B.C. or had their culture been as primitive as that of the Scythians

and Huns, they would have been absorbed in Hindu society. But as they were representatives of an advanced international culture and maintained constant contact with the seats of that culture (including Baghdad) outside India, it took them very long to be completely Indianised.

As a matter of fact they wanted to establish in India the same type of Islamic state as existed in other Muslim countries, i.e. a dynastic monarchy limited by the *Shariah* and giving its non-Muslim subjects religious and cultural freedom but slightly fewer political rights. However, as we shall see, the attempt to make the Delhi Sultanate an Islamic state even in this limited sense did not succeed. It only had the unfortunate result of preventing the political unity of India from taking the shape of a new national unity.

But the very fact of Hindus and Muslims living together bad begun the process of cultural understanding which bore fruit after three centuries. The Delhi Sultanate, far from turning this spontaneous process of unification to some purpose, could not even understand it. It was the Mughal Emperor Akbar who made a conscious effort, for the first time in the thousand years which had passed since the death of Harsha, to revive the national unity of India. In this he was greatly helped by having before him the 300 years history of the Delhi Sultanate, its failures as well as its successes.

I

We have now to review this period from the point of the cultural ideal which the Delhi Sultanate tried to realise and its implications for the national unity of India.

The first half of the thirteenth century, when the Delhi Sultanate was taking shape, was on the whole one of distress and disintegration for the Eastern Islamic world. The decline

of the Abbasi *Khilafat*, the disruptive activities of the Batini sects, the pressure of the European crusaders from the West and that of the Mughals from the East, had weakened the Muslim states and no rallying point was left for the cultural forces of Islam.

The rise of the Delhi Sultanate provided such a rallying point. Scholars, saints, poets, generals, statesmen were attracted by Delhi as iron filings by a magnet. So the founders of the Sultanate had no time to think what form they should give to the new state. After the reign of Qutubuddin Aibak which merely was a period of military occupation, and during the twenty-five year rule of Iltumish, the Delhi Sultanate was almost automatically cast into the mould of the Eastern Muslim states of the period, i.e. it became, under the nominal sovereignty of the *Khalifa* of Baghdad, as independent monarchy professing to be limited by the *Shariah* (Divine Law). The nominal allegiance to the *Khilafat* of Baghdad was transferred after its destruction by the Mongols to the Fatimi *Khalifas* of Egypt and under the Syeds to Timur. The Lodi and Suri dynasties called themselves, as their coins show, simply the representatives of the *Khalifa* without naming any particular person.

Not only in relation to the *Khilafat* but in other respects also the Islamic character of the Delhi Sultanate was no more than a fiction. The Persian absolutist concept of monarchy, which had crept into the Islamic state after the four Righteous *Khalifas*, had become more defined in the states ruled by Person and Turkish kings. But in the Delhi Sultanate this un-Islamic absolutism became still more pronounced. In the Persian and Turkish states the kings had deviated from the Islamic way only in the field of constitutional law and to some extent in the system of land revenue. In most other matters they had to follow the *Shariah* as interpreted by the

Fuqaha (Doctors of Islamic Law). But in the Delhi Sultanate to follow or not to follow the *Shariah* depended on the sweet will of the Sultan in his private life as well as in the administration of the state. Specially in the field of Common Law the Sultan's right to legislate according to his will was acknowledged by all.

In economic matters also the Delhi Sultanate deviated more than other Islamic states from the line laid down by Islam. For example, the rent of agricultural land, which had been one-fifth of the produce (and less for inferior land) since the beginning of Islam, was raised considerably by the Lodis and Suris and once, under Alauddin Khilji, had soared up to one-half The concession of fifty per cent granted by Islam to Muslim cultivators does not seem to have ever been given by the Delhi Sultans. The Islamic law of inheritance was not strictly enforced. Converts to Islam were allowed to follow the local customs which in many cases meant disinheriting daughters in violation of one of the fundamental principles of the *Shariah*. Lending and borrowing money on interest, strictly forbidden by Islam, was common, at least among the Hindus.

In the field of morality the personal life of the king had in practice been above all checks since the end of the Righteous *Khilafat*, but *Ihtisab* (moral censorhsip) in public life, which had been more or less strictly in force in some Muslim states was so lax under most of the Delhi Sultans as to be practically non-existent. The aristocratic class was on the whole subject to moral restraints but they were not exercised by the state but by public opinion inspired by the religious spirit of the common people.

In short, the Delhi Sultanate was not an Islamic state even in the limited sense in which this word is used for other medieval Muslim states. Nor was it a national state of the

Muslims. No doubt the Muslims, as coreligionists of the Sultan and forming the bulk of the army on which he depended, were on the whole treated better than the non-Muslims. But even the Muslims were subject to discrimination, the nobles being regarded as superior to the commoners and Muslims of foreign origin to the local Muslims. In relation to the king, however, all classes of Muslims as well as Hindus were mere subjects and had no voice in shaping the policy of the state. So we cannot call the Delhi Sultanate anything except an absolute monarchy under various Muslim dynasties.

But the important question in which we are interested is the relation of the Delhi Sultanate to the Hindus who formed the majority of the population and its implications for Indian nationhood. We have seen that from the beginning of the ninth century to the end of the tenth most of north India was under the rule of Rajput princes and under the influence of the romantic age of chivalry. From the point of view of national unity it was a period of utter disintegration. The division of Hindu society into castes and subcastes had passed all reasonable limits. The leading classes, that is the Rajputs and the Brahmins, had also been divided into castes and *gotras*. Among the Rajputs the tribal spirit was so strong as to lead to unending feuds. Nobody could work for the unity of India in such an atmosphere.

It was this disintegration which gave the Muslim invaders the opportunity of conquering India. No united front was ever presented to Mahmud Ghaznavi. Against Muhammad Ghori a last minute rally by Rajput rulers was attempted but it was not complete. The powerful raja of Kanauj did not join it and no more than a small fraction of India's power of resistance was used.

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate produced the same feeling among the Hindus as the conquests of the Gurjars

and Huns had done. Physically they yielded to the conquerors but their souls entrenched themselves in racial and religious self-sufficiency and aloofness in such a way that no intercourse between them and the Muslims seemed to be possible. The term *malechcha*, originally coined for the Gurjars and Huns was now used for Muslims.

If the antipathy of the common Hindus to Muslims was mainly emotional, that of the higher classes to the Muslim state was due to more concrete reasons. The Hindu rajas and local chiefs were afraid that the Muslim rulers would annex their territories. They could have tolerated a central government, even of foreigners, if it merely levied tribute and for the rest left them to themselves. But a unitary government trying to seize their territories was repugnant not only from the point of view of self-interest but also on principle as it was contrary to all Indian tradition.

The Brahmins suffered no less from the change in the political constellation. Though the Delhi Sultanate had given complete religious freedom to the Hindus, recognised their personal law and appointed Brahmins to help the judges in administering it, it could by no means make up for the loss of social and economic advantages which the Brahmins as a class had to suffer. Formerly, they were employed as *purohits* (priests), astrologers and judicial officers, and administered charitable departments of the state (which had now been replaced by the Delhi Sultanate); their privileges had been recognised by law, their security guaranteed by the state. But now the political upheaval directly hit their official status and privileges and indirectly undermined their social position and influence. Besides, the example of Muslim society, which had no priestly class, may have influenced Hindu society to attach less importance to the Brahmins.

As for the generality of the common people, their

relations with the ruling power became, in course of time, fairly good though not very close. After the initial phase of resentment and mistrust they began to cooperate with the new government because they had no particular reason to be dissatisfied with it. On the whole, the Muslim kings maintained peace and order, ruled justly and gave religious and cultural freedom to their Hindu subjects. No doubt they had changed civil and criminal law and introduced some provisions of the Islamic law. But in India it was nothing new that rulers should enforce their own law on their subjects professing another religion. Both the Hindu and the Buddhist rajas had done it. Of course, interference with the *Dharmashastra* in the field o religious and personal law would have been intolerable to the Hindus. But this the Delhi Sultans scrupulously avoided. On the contrary, they were considerate enough to appoint pundits in the central as well as provincial courts to help in deciding cases of Hindu personal law as well as those which concerned the religious life of Hindus.

But though the Delhi Sultanate had given political unity India the Hindus could not regard it as their own state because the rulers, with the exception of Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Suri, made no positive attempt to bridge the gulf between themselves and their Hindu subjects. In fact, they widened it by imposing a poll-tax (*Jizya*) upon the Hindus with the misguided motive of justifying the name of being an Islamic state. As we have shown, the Delhi Sultanate was not an Islamic state, and even if it had been one, it had no right to impose the *Jizya* because the latter was meant by the rulers of the early Islamic state to be the price of exemption from compulsory military service which no longer existed. Though the *Jizya* introduced by the Delhi Sultans was only a nominal amount and was not regularly realised, it hurt the self-respect of Hindus. Moreover, they were in practice, though

not in theory, discriminated against in the matter of state service. Mohammad Tughlaq was the first ruler who pursued a conciliatory policy towards the Hindus. By the end of this period, under Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Suri specially, religious discrimination in state service had practically disappeared. Hindus had begun to learn Persian, the court language, and to get some of the biggest and most responsible posts. The smaller Muslim states, which had made themselves independent of the Sultanate, e.g. Bengal and the Bahmani kingdom of the Deccan, or which had not yet come under the sway of Delhi, e.g. Kashmir (during the reign of Zainul-Abidin) had almost from the very beginning a much more equitable policy and had won the affection and confidence of the Hindus.

But long before Hindus became reconciled to the Muslim rulers their relations with the common Muslims had improved considerably. As soon as they saw that Muslims made India their home, that they were practically free from racial prejudice and their religious bigotry and feeling of superiority as conquerors was gradually diminishing, they began to relax their hostile attitude. One of the most powerful factors which contributed to this reconciliation was the historic mediating role played by the Muslim Sufis and Hindu saints of the Bhakti school.

Most of the Sufis in India conceived of and preached divine unity in terms of idealistic monism. The Hindus found their ideas very similar to those of Vedantic philosophy and were naturally attracted by them. But the greatest attraction for the lower castes of Hindus was in the social organisation of Islam which was founded on the basis of equality and fraternity, and still retained something of these qualities. Quite a large number of Hindus embraced Islam and, even those who did not were now better disposed towards the Muslims.

The Hindu converts to Islam were at first ostracised by their own people but gradually came to be tolerated and served as a connecting link between their brothers in blood and their brethren in faith.

Another great force which created a general atmosphere of religious harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims was the Bhakti movement. Bhakti was popularised in northern India by Ramananda, the famous saint of the Ramanuja school who probably lived from the end of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century. He made its appeal stronger and wider by substituting as the object of devotion Ramachandarji, the *Avatar* (incarnation) of Vishnu, for the god himself, for Rama's fascinating personality was much nearer to human imagination. Ramananda threw open the doors of his circle to all the four castes, men and women, and even to Muslims. His gifted disciple Tulsidas used the magic of his poetry to win the hearts of millions of people for Ram Bhakti. Another great disciple of Ramananda, Kabir (who lived from some date in the first half of the fifteenth century to the end of that or the beginning of the next century) started a movement of his own which attracted not only Hindus but many Muslims as well.

The song of love and devotion sung by Kabir is a symphony of the deepest notes of the religious feeling of the common people of India—Hindus, Muslims and others. Kabir's concept of God is a purely mystical one. In fact God is to him not a concept but an experience beyond the grasp of the intellect. When attempts are made to interpret this experience in intellectual terms the results are conflicting, even contradictory. According to Kabir each of the contradictory concepts is true in its own way but each is incomplete, expressing only one aspect of the truth. So, he regards the spiritual foundations of Hinduism and Islam as one and finds

equal inspiration in both, but is revolted by the superstructure of dogma and ritual which both had built on this foundation. He strongly condemns the distinction of caste, colour and country. Like other exponents of Bhakti, he was averse to systematising or writing down his ideas but expressed them in songs which were sung in his lifetime but later compiled in several books.

More or less contemporary with Kabir was the renowned saint Guru Nanak (born A.D. 1469) who founded a new religious movement by blending the concept of the unity of God which was closely allied to the Islamic concept with the Hindu doctrine of rebirth. Along with mystical experience as the basis of religion he greatly emphasised moral action. His movement of spiritual purification and moral reform of both Hindus and Muslims later developed into a separate religious sect.

In Bengal there were several Bhakti movements counting both Hindus and Muslims among their followers, but the most popular was the Krishna Bhakti of the great saint Chaitanya (1485-1533). In Maharashtra Namdeo (born in the early fourteenth century) and Tukaram (seventeenth century) raised Bhakti above the level of a mere popular movement and exercised a deep influence on intellectual circles as well as on the common people.

These great and pure souls, some of whom are named above, tried to divest religion of its trappings, taking the pure spirit of Hindu mysticism and that of Islamic and blending them into a religious movement which would unite the whole of India in love and devotion to one god. But unfortunately pure mystical experience is not enough to constitute a religion. So these religious movements soon crystallised into separate sects with all the adjuncts of positive religions. Still, this does not mean that their efforts were wasted. Though

they could not free religion from the bonds of ceremony and ritual, they broke down the stagnation of religious consciousness and gave it a new movement, flow, freshness and life. They could not merge the currents of Hinduism and Islam on the surface, but they showed that the springs which feed them do meet somewhere below it. They created an atmosphere of religious harmony in India which was not to be seen anywhere else in the Middle Ages.

In aesthetic consciousness, which is deeply influenced by the physical environment, Hindus and Muslims came still closer to each other. Two of the fine arts, painting and music, had been subjected to severe limitations by Islam and generally did not prosper in Muslim countries. In India, during this period painting seems to have been discouraged by the Muslims but Indian music captured their hearts. Apart from the common people who were generally converts from Hinduism, many Muslim nobles and kings, especially those of Bijapur and Jaunpur, were very fond of music. Sultan Hussain Sharqui of Jaunpur is said to have invented a new musical style called 'Khayal' which became equally popular among Muslims and Hindus. 'Dhrupad' the classical Hindu style was much liked by Muslims of refined taste. Ibrahim Adil Shah, the king of Bijapur, was a great connoisseur of music and wrote a book on the subject, *Nauras*. The Muslim sufis adored music. In short, music was one of the forces which caused the hearts of Hindus and Muslims to beat in unison.

Architecture was the main field in which the Muslims gave expression to their love of beauty and which afforded the greatest opportunity for the Muslim and Hindu minds to influence each other. Among the rulers of India during this period the Muslim kings had the largest resources and could indulge their desire for fine buildings, but they generally had to employ Hindu architects and artisans. The conception of

a building born in the mind of a Muslim king could not be unaffected by the Indian environment. Further, when it was designed and executed by a Hindu architect it was recast in the mould of the Hindu mind. So the process of blending, which in spite of the conscious efforts of some great mystics could not be carried out in the field of religion, was effected almost unconsciously in architecture. In the very first century of the Delhi Sultanate, a Hindu-Muslim style of architecture had come to into being which was adopted in the fourteenth century with various degrees of modification by the independent Muslim kings of Bengal, Gujarat and the Deccan and also by the Hindu rajas of Bundelkhand and Rajasthan.

What now remains of the first great buildings of the Delhi Sultans, such as the Jama Masjid of Ajmer and the Quwatus-Islam mosque near Delhi, proves that from the very beginning the Islamic conceptions of architecture had to be adapted to the available resources. Fergusson has pointed out that the design of the Jama Masjid in Ajmer has been taken from the Jain temple on Mount Abu! As for the Quwatul-Islam mosque, it was actually built on the site of a temple and from its debris. The magnificent Qutab Minar, which was a part of this mosque is Islamic in its general conception but in its execution one can clearly see a resemblance to the pillars of the Gupta era and the *shikhars* of the medieval period. Moreover, the decorative work shows the direct influence of the north Indian Hindu and Jain styles. The images of human beings and animals have been avoided but scattered flower wreaths and baskets are eloquent testimony of the source from which they have come, and the way they have been harmoniously blended with the Arabic text in the Kufic style of calligraphy has produced a beautiful effect.

The Muslim states which has seceded from Delhi adopted

this style with local modifications more in keeping with the Hindu styles. Specially in the buildings of Gujarat, all the elements except the dome and the pointed arch are Hindu. The mosque of Muhafiz Khan, built in the fifteenth century and the mausoleum of Abu Turab, built in the sixteenth, are fine examples of this style.

There was much more intimate intercourse and harmony of feelings and ideas between Hindus and Muslims in the smaller Muslim states which made themselves independent towards the end of this period than in the Delhi Sultanate. These states, specially those of Bengal and the Deccan were in a purely Hindu environment, far from the centre of Muslim power and in asserting their independence against Delhi had to depend on the goodwill and support of their Hindu subjects. In their small spheres their rulers were nearer to the people and understood and respected their feelings and desires. They generally abstained from displacing local chiefs and simply levied a tribute on them. They associated Hindus with the administration of the state, freely appointing them to small and big posts. So they were more successful in establishing contact with their Hindu subjects and winning their affection.

Among the kings in Bengal, Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1518) and his son Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah (1518-33) won great popularity by among other things patronising the Bengali language and enriching it with translation from Sanskrit. At the instance of Husain Shah, Maladhar Vasu translated the *Bhagwat Gita* into Bengali. The *Mahabharata* was translated under the patronage of Nusrat Shah. Another Muslim king had the *Ramayana* translated by Krittvi Das.

In the Deccan states, relations between the Muslim rulers and their Hindu subjects were even more intimate and cordial. The founder of the Bahmani kingdom had got his

throne through the efforts of his Brahmin friend Gangu. Out of gratitude and love the king not only made him his Vizier but adopted the name Gangu as the nickname of the royal dynasty. During the Bahmani period Brahmins and other Hindus generally had a large share in the administration of the state. The five Muslim kingdoms which were built on the ruins of the Bahmani Sultanate continued this liberal policy. Their kings were patrons of the local languages and some of them were good Marathi and Urdu poets. Urdu was a dialect of western Hindi and came to the Deccan as the *lingua franca* in which the Muslim rulers and their Hindu and Muslim companions from the north conversed with one another. It was in the Deccan that it grew to be a literary language serving as an intellectual bridge between the local people and the immigrants (Hindu as well as Muslim) from the north.

But the greatest success in the effort to create harmony between Hindus and Muslims was attained during this period by Sultan Zainul-Abidin, the king of Kashmir. His name is honoured and loved not only by history but in legends known to every child in Kashmir. He was a great king in all respects but his greatest title to fame is that he was completely free from religious prejudice and did not make the slightest discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. When he ascended the throne in 1427 he called back the large numbers of Hindus, specially Brahmins, who had left Kashmir on account of the cruel treatment meted out to them by his predecessor Sikandar. He won their hearts through sincere regard and affection. State service was open to Hindus in Kashmir even before his time, but he put an end to all distinction of race and faith. He got many Sanskrit books translated into Persian so that Muslims could study the Hindu religion and the ancient Indian culture. He was a great patron of the arts and crafts, especially of music, and great

musicians from distant lands were attracted to his court. When more is known about the history of Kashmir during this period it will probably be found that the task of creating a nation performed by Akbar had its prototype in the work done on a smaller scale by Zainul-Abidin in Kashmir about a hundred years before Akbar.

Chapter X



The Third Confluence: The Hindustani Culture—I

During the Rising Phase of the Mughal Empire

In 1494 the ruler of Farghana, a small state in Turkestan, died and his son Babur succeeded him at the age of twelve. Babur was the descendant of two great conquerors. On the paternal side he was descended from Timur and on the maternal side from Chengis Khan. Inspired by their example he set out on an adventurous career from the very beginning of his rule. In 1504, after many ups and downs he conquered Kabul, made it his capital and began to dream of conquering India.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate had become a tribal state of the Afghans and their mutual feuds had sapped its strength. Ibrahim Lodi, the nominal Emperor, was hated by his nobles and his kinsmen. There could be no better opportunity for a foreign invader. So Babur opened his campaigns of conquest against India and in the fifth invasion in 1526 defeated and killed Ibrahim Lodi and occupied Delhi. Thus was founded the Mughal Empire which under Babur's grandson Akbar developed into the national state of India, serving as the background for a new national culture which we may appropriately name the Hindustani Culture.

Before we begin to trace the growth of the Hindustani culture we have to point out that the Mughals who invaded India in the first half of the sixteenth century were quite different from the Turkish invaders who had come more than 300 years earlier. The Turks who conquered India under Qutubuddin Aibak were mere warriors with no experience of government, and no cultural background of their own. Their simple natures had absorbed variegated elements of the Turanian, Persian and Islamic political and cultural systems and something of the local Indian colour, but they were not competent to blend all these different hues into one harmonious design. On the other hand, the Chagtai dynasty to which Babur belonged had long traditions of rulership; what is more, by grafting upon the sturdiness and hardiness of the Mughals and Turks the refinement and grace of the Persians and the spiritual depth and moral discipline of Islam, they had succeeded in developing a healthy and predominantly harmonious secular culture. When Babur came to India he brought with him this Mughal-Islamic culture and, more valuable, the experience of blending cultural elements of different origins into one harmonious whole. Both Babur and his son Humayun had the breadth of vision and the imagination to set about the great task of creating political and cultural unity in India; but they had very brief reigns. It was given to Akbar who succeeded his father Humayun at the age of fourteen and ruled for fifty years to build up a new national state and national culture in India.

We have said that the rulers of the independent Muslim states in Bengal, the Deccan and Kashmir had brought Hindus and Muslims politically and culturally nearer each other and even the later Sultans of Delhi like Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Suri had adopted a more liberal attitude towards the Hindus. But this was an almost unconscious and, there-

fore, very slow process of adaptation to the needs of the day. During the 300 and odd years which had elapsed since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, no Muslim ruler had the insight to look under the superficial current of history at the inner current striving to come to the surface, to see the soul of unity struggling to realise itself behind the outward diversity of Indian life. It required an Akbar, in whom the adventure and enterprise of a Chagtai, the large-hearted toleration of a Sufi and the liberal rationalism of a philosopher had combined, to produce the courage and strength to free India from the shackles of the past and strike the path of a new life.

The most important characteristic of the new Indian nation which Akbar brought into being was that it was based not on the community of religion but on the citizenship of the same state. The early emergence of this modern idea in India, where the modern age finally began as late as the middle of the nineteenth century is not as surprising as it appears at first glance. In Europe the need for making the state instead of religion the binding force in social life, arose after the Reformation which put an end to uniformity of religious belief; the idea originated much earlier in India when the Muslims came with quite a different religion and the population was divided into two opposite, and at first hostile, camps. The state should have taken the place of religion as the basis of collective life soon after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate but the might of tradition was so great that this necessary change could not be brought about till the rise of the unorthodox Mughal dynasty. The latter had broken away from the tradition of acknowledging the sovereignty of an Arab *Khalifa* long before moving to India, and in India produced a ruler like Akbar with an original mind.

It may be asserted that Akbar who had formally declared

himself to be the religious head of the Muslims of India should rather be called the founder of a religious state of the Muslims than of a secular national state. But every student of Indian history knows that Akbar's claim to religious leadership was merely a political stratagem to break the power of the *Ulema* and make his own doubly strong.

That the concept of a secular and non-communal state was quite clear in Akbar's mind is reflected in the following extract from his letter to Shah Abbas Safavi of Persia:

> The various religious communities are Divine treasures entrusted to us by God. We must love them as such. It should be our firm faith that every religion is blessed by Him, and our earnest endeavour to enjoy the bliss of the ever-green garden of universal toleration. The Eternal King showers his favours on all men without distinction. Kings who are shadows of God should never give up this principle.

Abul-Fazl who was Akbar's 'friend, philosopher and guide' writes in his *Ain-i-Akbari*:

> The king should be above all religious differences and should see that religious considerations do not come in the way of the duty which he owes to every class and every community. Under his all-embracing care everyone should find peace and happiness so that the benefits conferred by the shadow of God are universal.

Akbar acted sincerely and consistently on this principle. As soon as he had the reins of government firmly in his hands, he abolished the pilgrim tax and the *Jizya* in 1563, thus putting an end to the invidious distinction between his Hindu and Muslim subjects. But even more significant was the edict issued in 1564 that *no resident of India whatever his caste or creed, could be made a slave*. Seen against the background of medieval Asia this was a solemn declaration of the

fundamental policy that the state recognised the sanctity of individual liberty and the equality before law of all its citizens without any distinction of class or creed. Further, he threw all state services, civil as well as military, open to Hindus and appointed many of them to the highest posts in his realm. Matrimonial alliances between the Imperial family and some Rajput princes were an effective symbolic expression of the new spirit of brotherhood which Akbar wanted to created between Hindus and Muslims.

But we should be quite clear about the limitations of the nationhood and national state which Akbar's policy brought into being. In the introduction to this book the minimum condition for nationhood was said to be the acceptance of a common constitution by all sections of the people living in a country. In Akbar's time the sense of nationhood was still more limited. In those days the binding or cementing force in a political community or nation, in the absence of a written or unwritten constitution or common ideal of government, was the attachment of the people to the *person* of the king or his *dynasty*. Obviously the allegiance of all his subjects was enjoyed by that king along who was on the whole good and just to all without distinction, and was shown to his successors only as long as they followed this general policy. At that time the feeling of a common nationhood was not as deep and lasting as in these days of more or less permanent constitutions expressing the general will of the people.

It seems that Akbar was quite conscious that the solidarity of the state founded by him depended on the degree of attachment of the people to the person of the king. That was why he laid much more emphasis on direct contact with the people than any Muslim king had ever thought of doing. His practice of giving *darshan* (public audience) to the masses by sitting in the balcony of his palace revived the memory of

old Indian rajas and won the hearts of his subjects.

Other important traditions of the old Indian State were revived by the Mughal state under Akbar. Public charity and moral reform, which the Delhi Sultanate had handled only perfunctorily in the limited field of Muslim society, were now carried on systematically and their scope extended to cover all citizens without distinction. Hindu pundits and sadhus were supported by the state more or less like Muslim *Ulemas* and *Fugaras* (learned men and ascetics) and in many cases *mandirs* were given grants like *masjids* by Mughal Emperors. Akbar imposed restrictions on drinking, gambling and prostitution equally on all sections of the people. At the risk of being accused of interference with religion he even put down some specifically Hindu customs like Sati (the burning alive of widows.)

Akbar's great-grandson Aurangzeb made the unsuccessful attempt to turn this secular Mughal state into a Muslim religious state, with the result it was shaken to its very foundations and after his death reduced to a shadow of the great empire that it had been for a hundred years.

The task of building a national culture round the Mughal state which was in a limited sense a national state, was also begun by Akbar and continued with an interruption during the reign of Aurangzeb, to the end of this period. As we have seen in the preceding chapter the wide gulf between Hindus and Muslims in the early period of the Delhi Sultanate had been gradually bridged by many forces including the sprit of love and harmony fostered by Hindu Bhakts and Muslim Sufis, and the two communities had begun to influence each other's cultural life specially in the aesthetic field. The process of the blending of Mughal-Islamic or rather Iranian-Islamic culture with Hindu culture which had been automatically going on was quickened by the conscious and to some extent

planned efforts of Akbar. This resulted in the creation of a common culture centred on the court but spread far and wide throughout the Mughal dominions.

The root of a common culture is always a common language. In the thirteenth century the mixture of Persian with a dialect of western Hindi spoken in and around Delhi had produced a *lingua franca* known as Hindavi, Hindi or Hindustani, which later on came to be called Urdu. This was now the general medium of intercourse between Hindus and Muslims but had not yet acquired the status of a literary language except in the Deccan. In northern India Persian had been the court language as well as the language of literary expression and conversation among the Muslims. Hindus in government service had started learning Persian during the reign of Sikandar Lodi but, as state accounts were still kept in Hindi, it was not compulsory for Hindu employees to learn Persian. Now Todar Mal, who was Akbar's finance Minister, ordered that all accounts throughout the Empire be kept in Persian and all correspondence be carried on in the same language, with the result that all Hindus in the service of the state, whose number was now very large, learnt Persian. Moreover, Hindu noblemen and Rajput chiefs who now had daily contact with the Emperor in open court as well as in private audiences and who accompanied him in hunting parties and military expeditions, found adequate knowledge of Persian indispensable. So with the increasing contact between the Emperor and his Hindu subject the Persian language became more popular among the Hindus. But the direct and most effective cause of Persian becoming the common language of Hindus and Muslims was that perhaps for the first time in the history of India, Akbar opened a large number of government schools in which Hindu and Muslim children were taught together through the medium of Persian.

This system of common education for all citizens of the state helped not only in creating the community of language but also that of ideas. Apart from religious schools which were denomintional, all secular schools had the same syllabus for all people without distinction of caste or creed. According to Abul Fazl this syllabus comprised: Persian literature, composition and calligraphy as general subjects, and ethics, arithmetic, book-keeping and office work, agriculture, mensuration, geometry, astrology, domestic economy, political science, medicine, logic, physics, mathematics and history divided into grades and compartments. The policy of having common schools with a purely secular syllabus was specially designed to create a favourable intellectual atmosphere for national unity.

This educational policy promoted cultural understanding on a higher level. Hindu and Muslim scholars were encouraged to translate standard works from Sanskrit into Persian and to write books on past and contemporary history.

To take translation first. The *Atharva Veda* and *Ramayana* were rendered into Persian by Mulla Abdul Qadir Badaoni in cooperation with a Hindu pundit. Later, several translations of the *Ramayana* were made in Persian prose and poetry by Hindus. The *Mahabharata* was translated by a board of Hindu and Muslim scholars of which Mullah Abdul Qadir was a member. The great poet Faizi rendered *Lilavati*, the classical work on mathematics into Persian. Other Sanskrit books on mathematics and the natural sciences were rendered into Persian by Hindu translators. During the reign of Shahjahan, Prince Dara Shikoh who was passionately interested in Hindu philosophy and mysticism, made the invaluable treasures of Hindu thought, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagwad Gita* and *Yoga Vashistha* available to Muslim readers in Persian, and himself

wrote a book, *Majmaul-Bahrain* (The Meeting Place of Two Oceans) which is a comparative study of Hindu and Muslim mystic philosophy.

In history, the works of Hindu writers Brindaban Das, Sujan Rai, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Bhim Sen and Ishar Das are no less important than those of Abul Fazl, Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Khafi Khan and other well-known Muslim historians of the period. The study of these books shows that, apart from personal idiosyncrasies, there is a remarkable similarity in the point of view and the way of presentation of Hindu and Muslim historians. They have a common attachment to the Mughal state, not wholly based on personal interest, and have made a sincere effort to present a true and fairly objective picture of the period; their writings concentrate on the king as the central figure but have occasional revealing touches about social conditions and cultural life.

Persian poetry was also cultivated by Hindus along with Muslims. Mirza Manohar Tausani, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Banwari Lal Wali, though not to be classed with the great masters Faizi, Urfi, Naziri, Kalim and Qudsi, were better poets than many Muslim contemporaries who could claim Persian as their mother tongue. Chandra Bhan Brahman's best verses are a fine example of how a Hindu could, in a short time and to an astonishing degree not only make the Persian language but the spirit of Persian poetry his own. It was a period of transition for Persian Poetry in India. The graceful classical simplicity of Khusrau was gradually giving place to a romantic intensity of emotion and uncurbed flights of imagination reflected in Urfi's works. The verses of Hindu poets are also marked by this dawning romanticism.

As for letter-writing as a literary art, it had become the preserve of Hindu writers. With the exceptions of Abul Fazl and Alamgir (Aurangzeb) who are regarded as masters of

Persian prose, no Muslim writer in this particular branch of literature could be compared to Munshi Harkaran, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Munshi Madho Ram, Munshi Nihal Chand and Munshi Avadhe Raj. Two styles of literary letter-writing were current during the period—the simple direct and forceful style of Alamgir, reminiscent of the early heroic life of the Mughals and the heavy academic, magniloquent style of Abul Fazl reflecting the complexity and grandeur of the Imperial Court. Among Hindu writers, Chandra Bhan was an exponent of the first and Madho Ram of the second style. As long as letter-writing in Persian was in fashion in India, the published collections of the letters of Chandra Bhan and Madho Ram served as models for Hindu and Muslim writers. Though practical considerations led Akbar to make Persian the court as well as common literary language of the state, he did not neglect the promotion of the indigenous tongues: Braj Bhasha. Avadhi, etc., known under the generic name Hindi. Like other local language these had begun to develop before Akbar's time. Avadhi had produced a great poet, Malik Mohammad Jayasi, the author of *Padmavat*, during the reign of Sher Shah. Under Akbar the *elan* generated by national consciousness favoured the growth of Hindi which made great progress through the joint effort of Hindus and Muslims. Surdas, the famous bard of Krishna Bhakti was a Hindi poet of a high order. The collection of his songs inspired by love and devotion to Sri Krishna is known as *Sur Sagar*. Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan, a pillar of Akbar's court, was himself a good Hindi poet and a great patron of Hindi poetry. Other Hindi poets of Akbar's court were Ganga, Narhari and the favourite friend of the Emperor, Birbal, Akbar himself is said to have composed verses in Hindi. Later, Keshav Das, Bihari, Dev, and Ras Khan (a Muslim) carried Hindi poetry to great heights. Bhushan wrote epics to

immortalise the glory of Shivaji and Chatarsal.

In architecture the process of blending Hindu and Muslim elements had already begun in the earlier period of the Delhi Sultanate but its consummation in a perfectly harmonious style required the originality of mind and breadth of vision of the Mughal Emperors. Babur and Humayun had brought with them a purely Persian taste in architecture as well as Persian architects. The few buildings of their times which are extant, e.g. the mosques at Panipat and Sambhal built by Babur and that at Fatahabad, Hissar built by Humayun are in the style of the medieval buildings of Isfahan in Persia. So is the best architectural achievement of Akbar's early reign, Humayun's tomb in Delhi, designed by the Persian architect Mirza Inayatullah. But later on, Akbar attempted in this field as in the political and intellectual, a synthesis of the Turco-Persian Muslim conceptions with the Hindu-Indian and thus created the graceful Mughal style, pleasing to the eye and restful to the mind. The general design of the Jama Masjid in Fatehpur Sikri is taken from that in Isfahan; its imposing lofty gate is characteristic of the classical simplicity of medieval Persia. But its domes reveal the influence of the Jain style and so do the domes of the mosques on Mount Abu. In Jehangir's time the Hindu influence seems to have increased. The tomb of Akbar at Sikandra shows, in spite of its Muslim arches and domes, the general pattern of Buddhist *viharas* or of the *rathas* of Mahabalipuram.

During the reign of Shahjehan, which carried Mughal architecture to the height of perfection, architects were brought from Persia and other countries and a fresh wave of foreign influences tended to weaken the indigenous Hindu style. But the latter had by that time so completely fused itself into what was called the Mughal style that it was impossible to resolve this organic whole into its constituents.

A revolutionary step taken by Shahjehan was the use of marble on a large scale. The handling of this soft and fine stone required great care, restraint, skill and delicacy of touch so that not only the detailed work but the general design of buildings had to be considerably modified. To bring out the full luminous quality of the marble it was necessary that the floral work should be fine and delicate and large marginal surfaces should be left blank.

The ornamental effect was largely achieved by beautiful designs worked in a mosaic of multicoloured stones. Arches could not be cut in various geometrical shapes and pillars fashioned in novel and subtle designs. Domes could be made symmetrical with narrow delicate necks. Both in the designs of the buildings and in the ornamental work, new, fine and beautiful effects were produced with curved lines. In short, the use of marble made it possible for the architect's work to compete with that of the painter in grace and delicacy and the Mughal architecture acquired new qualities which neither the Persian nor the old Indian mind with the Persian and the bold experiment with Indian material created a new style in which the various elements are so completely blended into a harmonious whole that now their analysis into Indian and foreign, even if it were possible would make no sense. The 'dream in marble' known as the Taj Mahal, whether it was built by an architect from Shiraz or Italy, remains a conception from the mind of an Indian king, a memorial to Indian love, built in Indian marble and the embodiment of the purity, peace and pathos of the Indian soul.

Painting also developed a new style during this period through the blending of the Turco-Iranian with the old Indian style combining the charms of both. As said earlier, religious restrictions did not allow painting to flourish at the Muslim court during the Delhi Sultanate. But art was

developed by Hindu painters and mostly used to illustrate books. The traditions of Ajanta had changed with the times giving place in India to different medieval Indian styles, such as the Rajput style which had made great progress under the patronage of the Rajput courts. The subjects of the Indian painters were often taken from Hindu epic mythology—the stories of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the legends about Sri Krishna, the personifications of musical tunes (*ragas* and *raginis*)—but rarely from the lives of the common people. Their paintings present nature, in its myriad moods and colours simply but effectively. Complex and abstract motifs were avoided.

The descendants of Timur were great lovers of painting even before they came to India. It was under their patronage that Persian art had gradually developed, and the Herat school of painting reached perfection in the art of the great master Bihzad. Mir Syed Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad Shirazi, the pupils of Bihzad, came to India with Humayun. Their pictures show some Indian influence but the Turco-Iranian element prevails. Akbar who was an admirer of the realistic and forceful simplicity of the Hindu style wanted a new style to be created by combining the simplicity of the Hindu and the delicacy of the Persian schools. So he founded something like an academy of painting at his court where Indian and Persian artists worked together. The Persian masters Syed Ali and Abdus Samad initiated their young pupils, mostly Hindus, into the intricacies of Persian drawing and colouring. For theoretical education a library was provided which had a collection of books on art and the masterpieces of old artists. Akbar himself visited the academy very frequently to see the artists at work. Of the products of this school the most famous are Daswant, Farrukh Beg, Basavan and Sanvala. They followed the old Indian custom of illustrating secular and not

religious books. In the beginning their style was like its Persian model—ornate, elaborate and stiff, but gradually it acquired the liveliness, flow and vigour of the Indian style, so that by the end of Akbar's and the beginning of Jehangir's reign an independent Mughal style had developed.

Jehangir was not only a patron of art but was himself an artist and during his time Mughal painting reached its zenith. Farrukh Beg, Nadir, Mohammad Murad, Abul Hasan, Mansur, Bishen Das, Manohar and Daulat were the foremost artists of this period. Their scope had now extended far beyond the illustration of old tales and legends and included actual battles, hunting, love, the courts of kings, Sufi monasteries, pictures of men, animals, plants and flowers—in short all aspects of human life and nature which interested the Emperor and his nobles.

Shahjehan was less interested in painting than in architecture. Still, some of the princes and nobles patronised the art. But though painting had not lost its popularity, it had begun earlier than the other arts to show signs of degeneration which seems almost an inevitable result of excessive wealth and luxury. More emphasis was laid on superficial embellishment and decoration than on deeper artistic qualities. No painting was regarded as complete without a broad gilt border covered with fine, elaborate decorative work. Anup Chitra, Chitramani, Faqrullah and Hashim Ali are the outstanding artists of the time of Shahjehan but none of them can be ranked with Mansur, Abul Hasan and Manohar. Aurangzeb's religious austerity proved very discouraging to the art of painting and after him it deteriorated with the decline of the Mughal Empire.

As far as music is concerned, a perfect harmony of taste and sentiment between Hindus and Muslims had already developed during the period of the Delhi Sultanate at the courts

of the smaller independent states and the monasteries of the Sufis. So the Mughals found a common or national musical art an accomplished fact and had nothing more to do than to foster and promote it through their generous patronage. Music is the medium in which the deepest human feeling and experience express themselves without the help of intellectual concepts. The community of musical feeling which was evident among Indians of all castes and creeds showed that the hearts of the people of India were now beating in unison and the unity of a fundamental cultural consciousness as a permanent basis for a common culture was assured.

As for uniformity in general social life—in customs and manners, food and dress, enjoyments and amusements—which developed during this period, it is now so evident in the daily life of millions of Hindu and Muslim families that the theme needs no elaboration here.

Chapter XI



The Hindustani Culture—2

Politically the Mughal Empire reached the height of its glory during the first half of Aurangzeb's reign and then the process of decline began. Aurangzeb's wars of conquest in the Deccan emptied the treasury. His narrow-minded policy alienated the Rajputs, who had been the most loyal friends of the Empire since the time of Akbar, and raised three other hostile forces—the Sikhs, the Marathas and the Jats. As soon as the powerful personality of Aurangzeb disappeared from the scene, these four agencies, specially the Marathas, shook the foundations of the Empire from one end to the other. At the Mughal court the rivalries among the Turanian, Persian and Afghan parties weakened the central government to such a degree that provincial governors became practically independent. Foreign invasions from the north-west, which the power and prestige of the Mughal Empire had prevented for about two centuries, began anew. European traders specially the East India Company of London who had come to India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries exploited the unrest in the country to acquire partly by conquest and partly by political intrigues, large territories in India and began to play an important role in Indian politics.

Naturally, Hindustani culture reflected the degeneration which had set in, but it continued to occupy the position of

the common culture of India and even increased its sphere of influence. A new factor had, however, emerged in the cultural life of the country—the influence of Western culture through European and especially British traders, which, imperceptibly at first, began to show itself in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Hindustani culture which had developed during the reign of Akbar and his successors was essentially bound up with the Mughal Empire but its decay was slower than that of the Empire and even during the period of political disintegration it continued to be the connecting link between different cultural groups and regions. No doubt it had lost its freshness, force and vitality and begun to show signs of stagnation or rather deterioration, but the sphere of its influence became wide. It worked from new centres like Lucknow, Hyderabad and Murshidabad, and served as the common culture of large sections of the people throughout the country till the cataclysm of 1857 dealt a death-blow from which it never recovered.

The Persian language, which was its medium of expression, spread during this period to new regions. Not only in the shrunken Mughal dominions but also in the virtually independent states of the Deccan, Bengal and Oudh, Persian was used in government offices where very large numbers of employees were Hindus. The department requiring special literary skill known as the *Dar-ul-Insha* (secretariat) was predominantly manned by Hindus, so much so that in the eighteenth century the word 'Munshi' had acquired the special sense of a Hindu who could write good Persian. Even in Hindu states like the Maratha Empire, which had modeled its administration on the Mughal Empire, the official language was Persian. The East India Company had Persian as the official language till 1819 when it was declared to have

been replaced by English. But in practice office work was done in Persian till long after that date. For literary and scientific purposes educated Hindus as well as Muslims used Persian and even ordinary correspondence was carried on in that language.

From the point of view of literary and scientific progress it was a disappointing period. Though the number of books written was by no means less than in the preceding period, their general level was much lower. The creative impulse as well as the spirit of enquiry was almost exhausted. The highest objective of scholars was now to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and to preserve what they had left behind. Their main activities were to compile dictionaries or omnibus lives and anthologies of poets. In the latter, Hindu writes had an equal and in the former a larger share than Muslim writers. Among the anthologists the best known are Ghulam Ali Azad and Lachmi Narayan Shafiq and among lexicographers Tekchand, the compiler of *Bahar-i-Ajam*, Anand Ram Mukhlis of *Mirat-ul-Istilah* and Sirajuddin Khan Arzu of *Sirj-ul-Lughat*.

The numerous collections of literary epistles in Persian written in this period are almost all by Hindu Munshis. Their command over a once foreign language is astonishing. That there are deviations from the Ireanian idiom is natural and excusable. What is really unfortunate is that they follow the artificial and bombastic style of Madho Ram instead of the simple, chaste and racy diction of Brahman or Alamgir.

History and biography show the same increase in quantity and deterioration in quality. Yet there are some honourable exceptions like the historical writings of Ghulam Ali Azad, Lachmi Narain Shafiq and the *Siyar-ul-Muta-akhhkhirin* of Ghulam Hussain. Works on philosophy, astrology, astronomy, mathematics and the other sciences

sometimes show erudition but seldom originality. In many fields the contribution of Hindus is as important as that of Muslims. The numerous translations from Sanskrit into Persian were done exclusively by Hindus.

In pure literature the glut of weird, extravagant romances which take the place of the epics of the time of Akbar reflect the degenerations of taste. The sensuous, fantastic imagination of the people eager to escape from the realities of life had to be catered to by ingenious elegant nonsense like the *Bostan-i-Khayal*. The Hindus seem to have been less infected by this unhealthy trend as they wrote comparatively few stories and most of these were historical tales or folktales. The poetry of the period is also a sad comment on the intellectual and aesthetic decay which had set in. The romanticism of Urfi and Naziri had lacked simplicity and realistic substance, but at least it had the force of passion and the freshness of imagination. Now Bedil carried the subtlety of conceit and the extravagance of fantasy to such extremes that poetry was reduced to a kind of intellectual gymnastics. But it must be pointed out that though the generality of Hindu and Muslim poets followed Bedil, there were a few like his own pupil Anand Ram Mukhlis, and masters like Azad, Arzu and Shafiq who did not succumb to the prevailing fashion.

It was in this period that Urdu made rapid progress and became, at least in the greater part of northern India and the Deccan, a rival to Persian as a literary language. The East India Company paid tribute to its popularity by including it, along with English and the Western sciences, in the syllabus prescribed for Fort William College, which was set up for the education of its civil servants. Urdu writers were employed to write books of general interest and made translations from Arabic and Sanskrit in a simple and chaste language which was named Hindustani. Some of these books were

written in Devanagari characters using a few Sanskrit words instead of the more difficult Arabic and Persian ones. This helped in standardising high Hindi. Though the interest that the East India Company had taken in Urdu did not last long and the language of its administration continued to be Persian till finally replaced by English, the impetus which Urdu had received carried it forward by its own dynamic power so that it was made, along with English, the official language in the north-west provinces comprising the present U.P., a part of the Punjab as well as in many autonomous states.

Architecture and the fine arts also suffered from the decline of the Mughal Empire. The court of Delhi, a prey to political intrigue and struggle, had neither the inclination nor the resources to extend its patronage to the arts. The smaller independent states did in their small way encourage them, but they could not inspire artists to do anything more than copy the old masters.

No great architecture could be produced during this period but the modest palaces, tombs, places of worship which were built show the general characteristics of the Mughal or Hindustani style. The palaces of the Rao of Jamnagar and the Raja of Chatarpur, the memorials to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore, Maharao Umid Singh in Kotah and Maharaja Bakhtawar Singh in Alwar, the Visheshwar Mandir in Banaras and the Golden Temple in Amritsar, are all examples of this. Even the private residences of Hindu and Muslim noblemen which escaped the ravages of time have exactly the same designs as the houses built during the reign of Shahjehan.

In painting, beside the proper Mughal style which flourished at the courts of Oudh and Hyderabad, the Jaipur style, and those prevalent in Jammu and several states of the Punjab hills, which were considerably influenced by it, continued to develop. In music the classical Hindu and new, mixed styles

which had developed during the Delhi and Mughal Sultanates, were equally cultivated by the Hindu and Muslim states, and this art continued to give eloquent proof of the inner harmony of the Indian mind in spite of all the outward signs of discord.

The general uniformity in social life, food, dress, customs and manners which the Hindustani culture had produced among upper class Hindus and Muslims, continued more or less undisturbed till the end of this period. Accounts of Indian life written by British or other Europeans refer to a common Hindustani culture along with regional and sectional cultures. Much of the imposing super-structure built during the time of Akbar and his immediate successors was destroyed but the foundation were still intact.

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Whatever cultural influence the British had on Indian life during the period began after 1773, when the functions of government exercised by the East India Company came under the general control of the British Parliament and the Company began gradually to acquire the character of a civilised government; up to then it had been no better than a band of ruthless commercial brigands to whom culture was an unknown commodity. Some of the unjustified hatred against the British which the Indians entertained until Mahatma Gandhi dispelled it through his message of love was perhaps a psychological survival of the terrible days of political chaos when the East India Company had a free hand to suck the blood of the helpless people.

Under the first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, the Company's administration was completely overhauled and the arrival of a better type of civil servant made cultural contact between the Indians and British possible. Warren Hastings

himself was an enlightened, broadminded and cultured man. He was the first British administrator to feel that his countrymen should know something of the culture of a land of which fortune had made them rulers and should help in preserving and promoting it. At his instance Ghulam Hussain wrote the *Siyar-ul-Muta-akhkhirin* which is the most authoritative history of the eighteenth century. Warren Hastings not only had a thorough knowledge of English and the European classics but also knew Sanskrit and Persian. He so enjoyed the delicacy and sweetness of the Persian language that he once wrote to a friend suggesting that Persian be included in the syllabus of Oxford University and made part of the education of an English gentleman. He had the Muslim and Hindu religious laws codified and translated into English with the help of maulvis and pundits. Under his patronage the Calcutta Madrasah was established in 1781 and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal for research in Oriental studies in 1784, under the presidentship of Sir William Jones.

The establishment of the Calcutta Madrasah and the Benares Sanskrit College was the first step taken by the East India Company to encourage education in the area under its administration. After that it set up Fort William College for the training of its civil servants but paid no attention to public education for some time. In 1813, under the renewed charter which the Company received from the British Parliament, it was bound to spend Rs 1,00,000 every year on public education, but for the next ten years nothing was done as the controversy about whether this amount was to be spent on Oriental education or on the teaching of English and the Western sciences, could not be settled. In 1823 the Company's administration decided to make official provisions only for Oriental education. So a committee on public instruction was set up to establish colleges for the teaching of Arabic,

Persian and Sanskrit, to publish textbooks and to translate books on the modern sciences from English into the Oriental languages. Under this scheme two new institutions, Agra College and Delhi College, were set up.

But this scheme met with little success. Many orthodox Indians hesitated to send their children to government colleges as they were afraid of undesirable influences on their religious ideas. As for those who were prepared to have their sons educated, they were dominated by the motive of securing government service for them and thought that the government colleges which did not teach English would not serve their purpose. They had, with the help of a noble-minded Englishman, David Hare, already established Hindu College (1817) in which English was taught along with Persian and Bengali. Now Babu Gour Mohun Audrey set up another institution of the same type, the Oriental Seminary. These two institutions were packed to capacity while very few students attended the Oriental colleges. In 1829, when English was declared the official language, the Oriental colleges received a further setback. In 1835 the old controversy was again revived and Lord Macaulay, the chairman of the Committee on Public Instruction wrote his famous note which is a remarkable achievement of brilliant advocacy, sparkling rhetoric, crass ignorance of Oriental culture and extreme narrow-mindedness. However, the Governor-General laid down what proved to be the permanent educational policy of the British in India, that the Government would hence-forward promote the learning of the modern sciences and that English would not only be a compulsory subject in schools and colleges but the medium of instruction. The Company's administration did not concern itself at all with primary education in spite of the fact that many old *Maktabs* had been closed down during the period of political unrest and

economic distress. Christian missionaries and some socially conscious Indian opened a few primary schools in the area round Calcutta but these did not meet even a fraction of the general need. Industrial and vocational education was completely neglected, probably under the general policy of suppressing native handicrafts and industries. Medical education, however, did receive some attention and in addition to the medical schools in Calcutta (1807) in which the medium of instruction was Hindustani, the Calcutta Medical College (1835) and the Bombay Grant Medical College (1845) were established with English as the medium of instruction.

So we see that the educational activity of the British during this period was so limited and unorganised that it could not have any influence worth mentioning on the cultural life of India.

Much more important as an educative influence during this period than the establishment of a few colleges was the introduction of the printing press and newspapers. Printing in English had probably been started soon after the coming of the British but the first newspaper appeared in Calcutta in English in 1760 under the title *Hick's' Gazetteer*. Among the Indian languages Bengali was the first to have a newspaper, *The Bengal Samachar* in 1816. By the end of this period a number of newspapers in English and in the principal Indian languages appeared, helping to widen the range of information of the Indian people and occasionally introducing new ideas.

As far as the fine arts are concerned the contribution of the Company's Government and Anglo-Indian society of the period seems to have been very meagre. The commercial mentality of the bulk of this society had no other values than material profit and physical pleasure. Aesthetic sense was confined to a small circle of the better type of civil servants who

could not do more than adorn their drawing-rooms with copies and occasionally an original painting of Sir Joshua Reynolds or Northcote. Some Indian princes, especially those of Oudh, occasionally commissioned European artists to paint pictures for them, but this was not enough to give the necessary impetus to the progress of art in India. Amateur music, dance and drama were cultivated in Anglo-Indian society but they could not possibly be of a high level. The court theatre of Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Oudh probably followed the stage arrangements of the English theatre.

In architecture till the beginning of the nineteenth century the East India Company continued to copy the Portuguese style which was current in the European settlements in India. In the second half of that century many public buildings were modelled by English engineers on the buildings of London and other English cities built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The front of the Calcutta cathedral (completed in 1787), is said to have been copied from St.Stephen's Church at Walbrook, designed by the famous English architect Wren. Similarly, Government House (completed in 1802) is modelled on Keddleston Hall in Derbyshire. Most of the buildings of the first half of the nineteenth century are poor copies of the Renaissance style, with classical frontages, spacious verandas, low rows of columns and gigantic porticos. Occasionally Indians also built their houses in this style but the blending of the European and Indian styles had not yet taken place. However, the Lucknow buildings of the Asaf-ud-daulah period, specially the Imam Bara and Rumi Darwazah, owe their simple and well-proportioned design to the influence of Western architecture.

But the real and significant influence on Indian life was exercised by the technical aspect of Western civilisation. Modern armaments and methods of military organisation which

helped the British gain political domination in India made a deep impression and every Indian state acquired them as far as its resources allowed. Steamship service which started in 1823 made travel by sea easier and encouraged Indians to visit foreign lands, and this helped them to broaden their views. Towards the end of this period gaslight, the railways and telegraph were introduced into the country. The first railway line was opened between Bombay and Thana in 1853 and between Calcutta and Raniganj in 1855. A telegraph line began to operate between Calcutta and Bombay, Madras and Attock in 1854.

In short, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century Western culture had begun to exercise some influence in a limited area on a certain section of Indians, but it was not enough to bring about any appreciable change in the general cultural life of the country. The people of India had no opportunity yet to look into the spirit of Western culture. What they had seen of it was brought by Christian missionaries or trading rulers and it appeared to them dangerous for their religion, their political freedom and their economic welfare. So their attitude to Western culture was much the same as to the political and economic domination of the British and their intense aversion to this culture was one of the causes of the Revolt of 1857.

Chapter XII

The Impact of English Culture on India (1857-1920)



Through the political supremacy of the British had been established in India in the first half of the nineteenth century the English variety of Western culture which the new rulers brought with them, had not yet made any deep impression on the Indian mind. The only aspect of Western civilisation which excited the wonder and admiration of the people in general was its technological progress represented by the railways, telegraph etc. The reason why English culture had failed to exercise any influence, except over a small section of Indians in Calcutta and a few other big cities, was threefold: (1) Indians were still satisfied with their own culture and did not think it needed any change. They had not realised that their political deterioration was to some extent due to their intellectual and moral degeneration, that their cultural life was suffering from stagnation and that any stimulus from outside which could stir it up should be welcomed. (2) Excepting a few like Lord Macaulay, the English in India had not yet been affected by the new superiority complex which had recently developed in England. They loved money and power but were to a large extent free from national and racial pride. They were not conscious of 'the white man's burden' and did not feel called upon to civilise coloured peo-

ple. In fact English administrators of the old school like Sleeman, who believed in riding roughshod over Indians politically, had a respect for the refinement, culture and scholarship of Indian gentlemen, especially Muslim, with purely Oriental education. In short, in spite of the Government policy of Westernisation of education initiated by Macaulay, the generality of Englishmen in those days did not try to impose their culture on Indians but were to some extent themselves influenced by Indian culture.

After 1857 the picture suddenly changed. The realisation of their political importance gave such a shock to the Indians that their faith in their own culture was shaken. Their rulers too with their traditional contempt for all physical and moral weakness, now looked down on Indians and their culture. When the New generation of English civil servants sincerely believing in their racial and cultural superiority and their holy imperialistic mission, came to India and saw the whole country benumbed and bowed down by terror, there was no doubt in their minds that they had to deal with a depressed people whom it was their sacred duty to uplift through Western education and culture. They realised that none but the British could grapple with the political chaos in India and establish peace and order; that the medieval Indian culture was out of date and could not meet the economic, political and intellectual demands of the modern age, and that India had to assimilate something of the modern Western culture which had helped its rulers to their present prosperity and power. There were many opponents of foreign intellectual and political domination, but they no longer dared to come out in the open. Their only refuge where they could be safe from the wrath of the Government was religion. So they lived a retired life in religious schools and monasteries. But generally those members of the old middle

and higher classes who had survived the political deluge were willing to submit to the new political and cultural dispensation. The Hindus who had a better capacity to adjust to changing circumstances made a rush for the new 'English' schools. The Muslims, on the other hand, kept aloof from Western education till the enlightened leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan showed them the wisdom of keeping abreast with the times. So the Government of India had no reason to revise its educational and cultural policy, which had been one of the causes of the Revolt of 1857, but decided to enforce it more systematically and thoroughly with the help of a large section of Indians. Apparently this policy succeeded in its object and an indigenous imitation of English culture was produced which gradually began to displace the Hindustani culture.

The new educational and cultural policy had a superficial resemblance to that of Akbar's in so far as it envisaged a uniform culture making for political unity, based on loyalty to the state. But the fundamental difference was that the state for which Akbar wanted to win loyal citizens was one in which all people had, under the absolute sovereignty of the king, equal status and equal rights without distinction of caste or creed. No doubt the ruling family had come from a foreign land, but it had settled down in India and made India its home. Akbar and most of his successors did their best to establish direct contact between themselves and their subjects and made them feel that the king was an embodiment of their sentiments and aspirations. But the 'state' round which the British wanted to rally the Indians was, strictly speaking, not a state at all, but a dependency of the United Kingdom, a subject country nominally ruled by the King-Emperor but actually by the British Parliament, that is, the whole British nation. This meant that the Indians now owed allegiance not

to one person or one dynasty but to a whole nation—to a nation which knew nothing about their history and culture, their aspirations and sentiments; which was at a distance of several thousand miles and could not be approached or influenced by them. In India the representatives of this ruling nation now made themselves almost equally unapproachable by breaking off whatever social relations they had so far had with the subject people. The natural consequence of this policy was that in the cultural field too, the British aimed at domination instead of reconciliation. They did not attempt like Akbar a blending of their culture with that of India and a social contact on equal terms, but tried to impose from above (keeping themselves socially aloof) as much Western education and culture on the people of India as they thought was good for them.

In fact the intrinsic merit of Western culture, apart from the glamour that everything associated with the ruling nation has for a subject people, lay in its modern scientific attitude of mind and practical efficiency. But unfortunately the way in which the fresh blood of modernism was transfused into the anaemic body of Indian society deprived it of just these vital ingredients and on the whole did more harm than good.

In the first place, the modern Western culture which reached India was not the genuine article but an export model of which the parts came from England but were assembled in India mainly by men of mediocre ability, who could be spared after selecting political and intellectual freedom to rule over hundreds of millions of voiceless, uncomplaining people for their own good, to make them loyal subjects of the British Government and reliable buyers of British goods, and incidentally to build up in their spare time a new educational system and create a new cultural world.

It must be said in all fairness that for about half a century these pioneers of the British Empire, specially many members of the Civil and Educational Services, worked with missionary zeal, not only to build up an efficient administration but also to enrich as far as they could within the limits of a medieval agricultural society, the country under their charge with the mental as well as material blessings of Western culture.

But obviously the unfavourable climate and uncongenial social atmosphere could not be expected to attract great scholars and artists from England and other Western countries to help build a genuine Western culture. The result was that this work had to be done by amateurs, that is, by British officials and businessmen who could not achieve more than an imitation of outdated English fashions, in dress and furniture, art and architecture and in the general way of living and thinking. The culture which emerged in this way should not really be called English or Western but an Indian variety of the colonial culture which was springing up in the colonies and dependencies of the Western powers in Asia and Africa.

Moreover, even this ersatz English culture could not be properly transmitted to Indians owing to the racial pride and unsociability of its British, especially English representatives in India. The intrinsic difficulty faced by foreign rulers in playing the role of teachers and reformers in a subject country was aggravated in India by the fact that the teachers regarded it beneath their dignity to have any social contact with the taught. So when the Indians, looking on from a respectful distance, tried to see English culture as embodied in the life of the English in India, they only got a glimpse of such superficial phenomena as their dress, food and general outward way of living, or their unsociability and what appeared to be their religious scepticism and materialism. In all

these the devoted cultural disciples tried as best they could to imitate their masters. The basic qualities of the English character—self-respect, self-control, strength of will combined with adaptability, moral courage, the spirit of the 'sportsman' and 'gentleman'—and those characteristics of modernism which the English shared with other Western people—the scientific spirit of inquiry, and the will to harness the forces of nature in the service of human happiness—remained hidden from the eyes of most Indians and had no influence on their life. Lord Macaulay had hoped that the study of English and the modern sciences would produce a class of people Indian in appearance but European in spirit. What actually happened was that many educated Indians became imitation Englishmen in outward appearance but in the moral and intellectual spheres they were either totally uninfluenced by the English character, or assimilated its worst features which turned them into unprincipled, unbalanced, denationalised individualists.

In short, the new culture which a section of upper and middle class Indians tried to evolve under the influence of colonial English civilisation was a common but not a national culture. It produced a degree of uniformity among educated Indians but not the inner unity which is born of a community of faith in the higher values of life. Nevertheless, as it was of service in shaking the Indian mind out of its torpid slumber we have to take some notice of it.

But we must make two things clear to avoid any misunderstanding. First, that what we are describing here is not the cultural life of the English or the Europeans in India but that of the Anglicised or Westernised Indians who tried to imitate them, and, secondly, that the description does not apply to all educated Indians who had the benefit of Western education as this included many good and great men who took a leading part in political liberation and cultural

regeneration of the country.

The colonial English culture in India was built round the state, but it was a peculiar kind of state the like of which India had never known in her history. India had seen the Hindu religious state, the Buddhist moral state and the Mughal cultural state, which had more or less the same constitutional nature—sovereignty vested in a single individual, the raja or king, and all people without distinction having the same political status as his subjects. The pivot of social and cultural life used to be the royal court. In addition to executive, judicial and legislative functions, the king also had manifold cultural functions like social reform, moral censorship, dispensation of charities, patronage of learning arts and crafts and even the laying down of fashions in dress and manners. The centre of gravity of the state even during the reign of the Muslim kings was inside the country. But the state which the British now set up was in every way different from the traditional Indian state. As a matter of fact it was not a state at all but a subordinate administration without sovereign powers. Sovereignty was vented nominally in the King-Emperor, but actually in the British Parliament which had delegated most of its authority to the Viceroy, who discharged the functions of government with the help of the Civil Service. This Service was for a long time exclusively composed of foreigners who considered themselves racially and culturally superior to the native and expressed this superiority in every possible way so that the very word 'native' came to be used as a term of contempt. Obviously under these circumstances there was no possibility of that understanding between the rulers and the ruled which is indispensable for good government. We have already admitted that the British Civil Servants who came out to India after 1857 on the whole made an earnest and in some cases heroic attempt to establish peace and

order, to run the administrative and judicial systems with integrity and efficiency and to improve the lot of the people. But their efforts generally failed to achieve the desired success partly on account of an atmosphere of mutual estrangement and suspicion between them and the people, partly because the economic policy of their government (to which we shall refer later) was intrinsically incapable of leading to genuine prosperity and peace.

As far as its cultural function was concerned, the government did not take any appreciable interest in promoting cultural activities beyond providing education through a foreign tongue to a very limited number of people. The cultural and social life of the rulers themselves was a sanctum forbidden to their subjects—not a lighthouse to guide them. The rulers did have a consciousness of their duty to carry to the benighted people Western light and learning, but they thought that by teaching Indians English literature, modern philosophy and the sciences they would put them on the way to Western culture. A cultural clearing-house of the type which the Mughal court had maintained could not be set up by the British as it required imagination as well as sociability, which they did not possess.

This impersonal, non-cultural, non-sovereign state could not make any direct contribution to Indian culture. But it gave India peace and order and, what was still more valuable and significant for our future political and cultural development, a new concept of individual and national freedom and a preliminary training in the democratic technique of public life. Lord Ripon was the first Viceroy (1880-84) who introduced the principle of representative government at the Municipal Board and District Board level and thus provided Indians with an opportunity of learning the rudiments of the technique of modern democracy. Moreover he awakened

in them the desire for political equality by conceding to them through the much disputed Ilbert Bill legal equality with Europeans. It was the impulse created by the violent controversy over this Bill which led to the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. If the liberal policy of Lord Ripon had been continued by his successors it is just possible that the way to a political and also cultural understanding would have been evolved in India with the cooperation and under the guidance of the British. But this liberal policy was radically changed when the rapid growth o the movement for political freedom demanded a substantial transfer of power from British into Indian hands. All further concessions from the British Government had to be wrung through nationwide agitation which later took the form of passive resistance, and thee concessions always came just too late to satisfy the people. The reason why the British, in spite of their traditional love of political liberty, denied it to the Indians was that their economic interests forced them to hold on to power in India as long as it was possible.

To understand the economic policy of the British Indian Government which acted as a drag on its political policy it must be remembered that it was a successor to the East India Company and its most important object was to find as assured market for British goods as well as a safe field of investment for British capital. One of the reasons why British public opinion had criticised the East India Company and led the Government to subject it to more and more restrictions, was that the few shareholders of the company had monopolised the immensely profitable Indian trade. When the Industrial Revolution vastly increased the output of manufactured goods in Britain and new markets were needed, the East India Company was liquidated so that all British capitalists and indirectly the whole nation could exploit the Indian

market. The British Indian Government, therefore had to adopt an economic policy which linked India with the British industrial system, keeping the former a purely agricultural country which would produced raw materials for British factories and buy the goods which they produced. To enforce this policy the Government had neither the inclination nor the need to employ the crude methods of the East India Company. It could use the more refined and ingenious method of manipulating tariffs to achieve its double purpose of encouraging the import of British machine-made goods and discouraging the production of Indian hand-made articles, some of which were of great artistic value.

It is true that in India factories were set up, banks opened, railway companies started giving to the superficial observer an impression of economic progress. But in the first place all these were on a very limited scale in proportion to India's vast area and large population, and, in the second place, they were owned and managed almost exclusively by the British. Indians were associated with them only as customers or as labourers and clerks. As customers they derived some benefit individually but were collectively the poorer by sending their money out of the country; and as labourers, they were for a long time at the mercy of their foreign employers without the protection of any labour laws and without the strength which comes from forming unions. In short, owing partly to the deliberate policy of the Government and partly to its apathy, but mainly to the ignorance and listlessness of the Indians themselves, the modern industrial system came to India under peculiar circumstances in that its direction was absolutely in the hands of foreign industrialists without the safeguards which had been devised in Europe to check at least to some extent its harmful effects. The result was that almost all its advantages were enjoyed by the British and its

disadvantages suffered by the Indians. India on the whole retained her medieval agricultural economy. In fact the position became worse because indigenous manual industries were strangled to death in the iron grip of power industry. All workers, except the comparatively small number who were absorbed in modern factories, were diverted to agriculture thus increasing the already too heavy pressure on cultivable land. But even more disastrous for the Indian cultivator was the circumstance that Indian agriculture with its antiquated methods of cultivation was now hitched to the world economy and had to compete with highly advanced countries. In those countries the peasant was backed by cooperative banking, scientific methods of production and organised marketing; in India he was ridden by ignorance, the money-lender and malaria. So naturally he was defeated in every round. His cotton and wheat were graded inferior and sold at very low prices. His indigo could not hold its own against chemical dyes and its cultivation had to be abandoned. The Government tried many schemes to help him. The Agricultural Department and the Cooperative Department were set up; a research institute was started; model agricultural and cattle-breeding farms were opened; exhibitions of agricultural products and implements and of cattle were held. But owing to the indifference of the higher and the incapacity and dishonesty of the lower officials the poor peasant did not derive much benefit from these. The missionary zeal and selfless service which were required to carry the new methods to remote villages and persuade illiterate old-fashioned peasants to adopt them were beyond the capacity of the foreign Government or its servants. As for the landlords, who in many provinces formed the link between the Government and the cultivators, as a class they did not stir a finger to help or encourage their tenants. So the poor cultivator, overwhelmed

by the new conditions and pressed between the upper and nether mill-stone, the landlord and the money-lender, was reduced to appalling misery. The direct and indirect consequences of the agricultural depression lowered the general economic level of the country and added to the political unrest.

Just as in the political and economic field the colonial English culture caused maladjustment by making the Indians aware of modern tendencies but affording them to opportunity of following these so in cultural life also its role was negative and disturbing. No doubt it stirred up the stagnant pool of life into movement among an important section of the people, but it could not give any definite shape to their idea of the future, being caught in a formless and purposeless present. They tried with some success to throw off the yoke of decrepit tradition but obedience to authority was so ingrained in their nature that they feel into a worse form of mental slavery by making it their ideal to imitate the life of the colonial Englishman.

Now let us see how the baneful influence of the colonial English culture was exercised through school and university education, the only means by which the British Indian Government tried to spread that culture.

As far as primary education was concerned, the Government had so little interest in it that its administration was transferred to the Municipal and District Board, the Education Department of the Government only prescribing the syllabus of studies and occasionally sending its officers for inspection. The basic change in the old system was that religious education was excluded from the syllabus, geography, history and some other useful subjects added to it and some arrangements, though very unsatisfactory, made for the training of teachers. No doubt this change led to a slight

improvement in the utility of education but as the conditions laid down by the Government for primary schools increased the cost of running them, which local boards or private agencies could not easily meet, the number of schools decreased considerably. Besides, even this limited effort was almost totally wasted on account of the insufficient period of schooling, poor methods of teaching and bad administration.

Secondary schools suffered from two disadvantages. There was a uniform syllabus of a purely literary type without regard for the individual bent of mind, and more disastrous, English was made the medium of instruction. In order that children could pick up enough English by the age of seven or eight to learn all subject through its medium, the language had to be given a predominant share of the syllabus at the cost of other subjects, thus lowering the general intellectual standard and educative values. Of course, university education also was imparted through English, but in this case there was some choice of the subjects of study. The worst of the many bad consequences of teaching through a foreign tongue was that the taught lost the habit of associating the written or spoken word with any clear idea of its meaning. Learning by rote without understanding had been for centuries the bane of Indian, in fact all Eastern education. 'Modern education' in India made things worse by taxing the memory of pupils with strings of words of which even the sounds were totally unfamiliar. Education in the natural sciences, which was doled out in a much smaller measure than literary education, showed this defect more conspicuously. Formula-repeating parrots were even more uneducated than rhyme-reciting parrots.

If, in spite of all this, there were many capable, even brilliant people among the products of English education the credit does not go to the system but to the exceptional merit

of individual teachers, British as well as Indian, and to the extraordinary talent of individual pupils. Otherwise, generally those educated in modern Western educational institutions were like the products of the old-fashioned Oriental seminaries. Both were replete with undigested information. The one mental faculty which was cultivated was passive memory. The powers of reflection, reasoning, inquiry, criticism and the practical application of knowledge to life were starved out.

Only in two respects were the graduates of the Western type of universities better than those of the Oriental seminaries. They had more up-to-date information about the physical and social world and were better equipped for the work which was expected of them. They could obey orders unquestioningly and faithfully follow the instructions of their British superior officers, and do all mechanical work not requiring judgment, will or initiative. There was a demand for them in the service market and by Indian standards they were sold for a handsome price. Those who were not absorbed in government service went in for law and in a few cases for other independent professions. As the number of university graduates increased, competition in these professions, especially in law, became greater and greater and they fell victims to unemployment in increasing proportion.

Such were the pioneers of the modern age and the colonial English culture, destined to illumine other minds with the new light from the West. In all fairness it must be said that they made an earnest effort to imitate what they thought to be the English way of life. It was not their fault, but that of their education, which had not equipped them even for intelligent imitation based on a correct understanding of the original, and they formed a preposterous idea of the fundamentals of the English character. They saw that the English

attached more importance to material values than to the external forms of religious values and followed their example by affecting the materialist and the freethinker, not realising that the apparent materialism and religious indifference of the Englishmen was a new form of the intensely religious and moral Puritanism. Similarly, they mistook the healthy individualism of the English for egoism, their rational utilitarianism for love of money. If their English prototypes had lost much of the elevating spiritual influence of Christianity, the loss was partly made up by the moral and aesthetic influences of love for their nation, their art, poetry and literature. But the poor, blind imitators had lost all their moorings as they cut themselves adrift not only from their traditional religion and morality, but also from their art and literature, their homeland and the people.

Of Western art even Indians educated in England had very little understanding and those educated in India did not have any comprehension at all. Artistic taste can only be cultivated through contact with circles of artists and connoisseurs. In India there were no such circles. In England they were beyond the reach of Indian students.

As for English literature, no doubt they spent a considerable part of their school and university life reading a few of its selected pieces, but after finishing their studies, most never touched a book of any literary worth, their reading being confined mainly to the novels of the season or detective stories. Rarely did any individual of the type we are describing go deep enough into the spirit of English literature, especially poetry, to feel with the author the thrills of joy or the pangs of sorrow in the weal and woe of mankind. In short, the Indian mind generally merely touched the outer surface of English thought and sentiment and got nothing out of it except colourless, sapless, zestless egoism.

Obviously these bearers of the colonial English culture who could not even derive enjoyment of benefit from the intellectual and aesthetic wealth which the English language offered were incapable of making any contribution of their own to it. The only writing of any value in English was done by those Indians whose mind had originally been trained by the traditional Oriental education and who had subsequently learnt English. They wrote books on Indian philosophy, religion, law, history and archaeology in English as well as in their own languages. They also tried to adjust their literature and art to new circumstances and cast them in new moulds.

Under their guidance the vernacular literatures were diverted from the field of pure fantasy to the observation and interpretation of actual life. The revival of drama and the beginning of the novel in Indian languages restored to the Indian mind in a wider and richer form what it had possessed in the classical, but lost in the medieval age—the concept of life as a complex of subjective and objective reality and the art of portraying man in the setting of his physical and social environment in realistic proportion and natural colours. In Indian architecture, Western influence led to economy of space, especially through the use of straight lines, as well as to the considerations, of modern hygiene. In music the combination of harmony with melody and in painting the emphasis on perspective and proportion showed a distinct Western influence. Besides, Western influence which was, on the whole, healthy and contributed to efficiency though not to grace or beauty of life caused many modifications in articles of daily use like furniture, dress and food.

Most of this was, as we said, the work of those whose education had an Oriental foundation. Those educated exclusively in English schools and colleges during this period had very little share in the transmission of knowledge, inter-

pretation of life or creation of beauty. Their effusions, if any, were mainly confined to newspaper articles contributed to English journals under Indian direction, only a few having the signal honour of being accepted by Anglo-Indian newspapers. Their verbosity, confused thinking, involved writing, faulty grammar and idiom made them the laughing stock of Englishmen. Caricatures of their 'Babu English' and of them under fictitious names like Babu Jabbarjee B.A. or Babu Piche Lala M.A. were often published in Anglo-Indian journals.

In short, the intellectual as well as spiritual foundation of colonial English culture was hollow and weak. Yet the social structure built upon it at first sight looked imposing and not without an illusive resemblance to the stately edifice of the real English culture. Indian Sahibs put on what looked like English dress, spoke English to one another and pigeon English to their servants or other 'natives'. The well-to-do lived in bungalows furnished in the 'English' style, ate 'English' food served on tables, sitting on uncomfortable chairs and using awkward knives and forks. Casting yearning looks at the clubs of the real Sahibs they played billiards, tennis, and cards in their own consolation clubs. The more emancipated entertained themselves with European wines and if they could find an equally emancipated partner, with European dances. In manners, movements and gestures they assiduously tried to follow 'English etiquette'.

The spoken English of the native Sahibs was by no means less, perhaps even more, ridiculous than their written English. In writing, their mistakes were confined to grammar and style. But in speech the additional errors of pronunciation and accent heightened the comical effect. Specially when in the vain attempt to bring out the precise English tone, they strained their native organs of speech, curious sounds were produced which sometimes baffled the comprehension of the listener.

Their English dress was often made of showy material, ill-designed and ill-fitting and had very little in common with English clothes which are well-known for their fine cut and easy fit. Of balance, design and colour or of the suitability of the dress to the occasion they had not the faintest idea, their sole guide being the native 'bearer' an Indian version of the English valet. Their bungalows were barrack-like large rooms surrounded with verandahs. This style was evolved by the British Indian Government's building department, the Public Works Department, with the conscious object of providing comfort and the unconscious one of avoiding architectural beauty, and was known by the onomatopoeic name of the P.W.D. style. But it succeeded more in its unconscious than its conscious object. The furniture in these bungalows, in keeping with their constructional design, was equally sombre and austere. The only tolerable element of the colonial English culture was its food, a happy blend of English and Indian tastes, but the strain caused by the effort to observe English table manners took away much of its relish.

Not only in table manners but in the whole gamut of social behaviour, the native Sahibs mimicked the English Sahibs. But as manners are the outward expression of character and in this they basically differed from Englishmen, their efforts at imitating them were, at best like the movements of puppets. What was more deplorable, in some cases this superficial imitation of English manners spoiled their morals. They learnt reticence and reserve from Englishmen but as these unpleasant qualities were not tempered with English decorum and restraint they often degenerated into naked arrogance and malevolence. Similarly the imitation of the Englishmen's self-confidence and self-assertion without their sense of proportion made them aggressive and bumptious. Fortunately this mock English culture was almost wholly

confined to men. Women were rarely affected by it. But the few who did adopt it suffered even more disastrous consequences. During the period of social decadence the Indian woman had been reduced to a repressed, neurotic creature by her ignorance, ill-health and the restrictions to which she was subjected by society. Now she was suddenly dragged out of her safe, though stuffy retreat, into the troubles and temptations of life without the reserves which could help her keep her balance. The new culture not only ended her seclusion, which was a comparatively recent institution, but also reduced the traditional distance between men and women which had been kept in India from time immemorial; it not only brought her into 'society' but took her to the club to dance with 'strange' men. This 'emanicipation' led to a deplorable reaction; Indians generally alarmed by the example of Westernised women opposed genuine reform movements for the freedom and even education of women.

On this educated class the British rulers had placed their hopes for spreading the new light. They had justified their educational policy of concentrating on the education of a small number of upper and middle-class people with the argument that the new education would gradually 'filter down' from above. But these hopes were not fulfilled. Those above had hardly anything to give and even if they had, the will to give which is born of love and fellow-feeling was wanting. They were completely cut of, not only from the illiterate masses, but also from old-fashioned people with purely Oriental education. They lived like strangers among their own people and were proud of it. In the no-man's land between the East and West they were untroubled by patriotic feelings or national ties. The only thing which distressed them was that the door of admittance into English society was shut to them. In short, far from being eager to do their duty by their

countrymen they were not even conscious of it. They devoted themselves solely to the service of the foreign rulers. The work of national service, education and reform they left to others.

Though colonial English culture had, thanks to the support of the ruling power, replaced Hindustani culture as the common culture of the country, its sphere of influence was very limited. Its votaries were mainly those who owed their rise to the top level of society, to the patronage of the British Government. Among those who had no direct concern with the ruling classes, some were influenced by the new culture only to the extent of acquiring a broader outlook on life through contact with modern thought and some were so prejudiced against it as to shun it as if it were a pest. The latter group mainly consisted of orthodox religious leaders and their devoted followers.

Religious leaders, specially of the Muslim community were for some time against the new type of education and put a ban on it but later allowed learning of English and the Western sciences, at the same time warning their people against the social and cultural influence of the West. As a matter of fact, Hindu and Muslim religious leaders had not even approved of the Hindustani culture evolved during Akbar's time, as it was not based on religion. After the domination of India by the British, religious groups apparently had subsided into passivity but under the surface they were very active taking advantage of popular discontent to increase their influence over the people. As they were dissatisfied equally with the English and secular Hindustani cultures, they tried to skip a thousand years of history and lead the people to their respective religion-centred ancient culture. We shall see in the next chapter how this movement caused a cultural and political split between Hindus and Muslims.

Chapter XIII

Reaction Against English Culture: Political and Cultural Separatism

I

At the end of the First World War, new political circumstances caused something like a revolution in the attitude of the educated classes. Disappointed in their hope of getting the self-government promised by the British Government they now were conscious of their physical and intellectual subjection. So they turned to the religious groups and the masses from whom they had alienated themselves and made common cause with them against the foreign rulers.

This sudden change in attitude was only partly due to the disillusionment and resentment caused by the Reform Act of 1919. A more powerful factor was the economic depression which followed the wartime boom, and for the first time unmasked before Indian eyes the ugly face of imperialistic capitalism. Though this depression affected almost all classes who were the victims of unemployment and the cultivators who had to sell their produce at very low prices. During the War many industrial factories had sprung up, most of them with British capital. As the trade union movement and labour legislation were yet in their infancy, there were no

safeguards against the ruthless exploitation of labour which was going on, and when the end of the War threw millions of people out of work there was no provision for relief. Similarly there was a whole army of educated unemployed. As for the cultivators, their misery was boundless because there were three forces working for their ruin—foreign competition, the landlord and money-lender and occasionally, nature dealt a blow by withholding the vital rains or sending a fatal flood.

Though the Indian masses had been for centuries in this habit of submitting loyally to the government of the day, they were, on the other hand, always disposed to hold the government responsible for all the ills on earth. So they put the entire blame for the depression which had ruined the peasants and labourers on the foreign Government and it was not very difficult for the National Congress which had already attracted all anti-British elements among the educated classes, to turn the economic distress into political unrest. In this they were helped by the leaders of the Hindu and Muslim religious and cultural movements.

To combine these or less heterogeneous elements into a united front against the British Government, the Congress required a leader who could understand the needs of the masses as well as of the educated classes, who could appreciate the value of economic as well as religious and moral forces and who could sympathise with the legitimate aspirations of the Muslims as deeply as with those of the Hindus. Fortunately just at that time Mahatma Gandhi, who fulfilled all these conditions, appeared on the political horizon of India. It was his personal magnetism which drew all classes and communities to the Congress and his moral and spiritual influence which inspired them with one common purpose—freedom from the foreign yoke.

In the political campaign which the National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi opened against British rule the first action was the agitation for the repeal of the Rowlatt Acts of 1919. These Acts not only provided for the retention but an intensification of the repressive wartime policy of the British Indian Government long after the end of the War, and were clearly aimed at curbing the movement for freedom. Mahatma Gandhi took up the challenge by setting up the Satyagraha Sabha, with a programme of nationwide civil resistance. The Government struck at this movement by firing at a peaceful protest meeting at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar and later by proclaiming martial law throughout the province of the Punjab. The blood of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh victims of the Amritsar firing joined the three communities in a sacred bond of comradeship under the flag of the Indian National Congress.

The Indian Muslims bitterly resented the policy of the British Government in the Middle East where the Turkish Empire had been dismembered and where the new states so formed as well as other Muslim states were being used as pawns on the political chessboard. So they formed a semi-religious organisation, the Khilafat Committee, which provided a meeting-ground for the orthodox religious group and the new educated class of Muslims. The Khilafat Committee now decided to ally at self with the National Congress in the struggle for freedom and led the way by adopting Mahatma Gandhi's programme of Non-violent Non-cooperation which was based on the theory that a foreign government could only subsist with the cooperation of the governed and would collapse when that cooperation was withdrawn.

This dignified fight which consisted of organised resistance against laws which the Indians conscientiously believed to be unjust, fought on the whole without violence in word

or deed, freed the Indian mind from pessimism and defeatism and created the conviction that even an unarmed subject people could preserve their self-confidence and self-respect and aspire after freedom. Its first phase with ups and downs lasted for seven years. Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders were kept in jail for several years but the movement went on till the Government changed its tactics and adopted a conciliatory policy.

In 1928 when the Simon Commission came to India it was boycotted by all the regular political parties and could only record the evidence of private persons or groups representing particular sectional interests. On the other hand, the Nehru Committee Report envisaging India as a free Dominion of the British Common wealth was adopted by all parties, except a large section of Muslims headed by the Ali brothers who opposed its provisions dealing with communal representation. This was the end of the communal harmony achieved ten years earlier and though many Muslims continued supporting the Congress, a large section of the community was overcome by separatist tendencies. The Congress, however, adopted the Nehru Report at its Calcutta Session (December 1928) with the proviso that if Dominion status was not conceded within one year, the Nehru Report would lapse and the Congress would revert to its policy of complete independence. As the Congress demand was ignored by the British Government it made the irrevocable decision to strive for complete independence at midnight on December 31 1929. On January 26 1930, the historic pledge of independence was taken by millions of people in public meetings held all over India.

In March 1930 the second phase of India's struggle for independence began with the breaking o the law which forbade people to manufacture even a small quantity of salt

without a licence from the Government. The reason why this particular law was made the target of civil resistance was that the heavy tax on salt had raised its price causing hardship to the poorest people. Mahatma Gandhi's famous march on foot to Dandi situated on the Kathiawar coast, with the declared object of making salt from sea-water, galvanised the whole country into disobeying laws which were manifestly unjust and boycotting foreign cloth which came mainly from British factories. This time the movement was perfectly organised and disciplined. About 100,000 people of all castes and creeds courted imprisonment, many suffering physical violence at the hands of the police without attempting retaliation. Many died in police firings.

Early in 1931 some moderate leaders arranged a truce between the Congress and the Government through what is known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Mahatma Gandhi attended a Round Table Conference in London to negotiate an honourable peace with the British Government. But no agreement could be reached and the Civil Disobedience campaign was resumed after the Mahatma's return to India. This time the Government was even more ruthless than before. Not only were all Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, sent to prison but the total funds of the Congress Committee throughout India and also the private assets and properties of Congress leaders were confiscated. The fear of losing their all and abandoning their families to starvation, proved stronger than imprisonment or death for many soldiers of freedom and in course of time the movement died down.

Taking advantage of the temporary collapse of the Congress movement, the British Government convened another Round Table Conference of a few safe people and prepared a scheme of political reform which was passed by the British Parliament in 1935 under the name of the Government of

India Act. This provided for the transfer in the provinces of all departments and in the Central Government of industry, commerce, railways, etc., to elected Indian Ministers, but retained the veto powers of the Viceroy and provincial Governors. The Central Government was envisaged as a federation of British India and the autocratic Indian states, the latter sending thirty-three per cent of the members to the lower and forty per cent to the upper chamber of the central legislature—all nominated by the rulers.

Before the general election held in 1937 under the new Act, the Congress had formally suspended the Civil Resistance movement and the Government released Congress leaders. The latter fought the election with great success. In five provinces the Congress Party won an absolute majority and in the rest was either the largest or second largest single party. After hesitating for a few months it decided to work for the reforms in the provinces while opposing the reactionary scheme for the Central Government. In five provinces it formed its own ministries and in two coalition ministries as the majority party.

In the history of the National Congress, taking the responsibility of government with limited powers was a fateful event which had a mixed result. On the one side, it gave the Congress leaders the opportunity of proving their administrative capacity, of which they made very good use and extended the influence of the party, increasing its membership tenfold. On the other side, it diverted to some extent the Congress from its ideals of complete independence and communal harmony, thus alienating the minorities, specially the Muslims. The reason obviously was that the flood of new members, many of whom did not wholly agree with the fundamental principles of the Congress but were attracted by the glamour of power, submerged the older element and

appreciably changed the general colour of the party, giving it a conservative and communal tinge. A considerable number of its former members seceded, some joining the leftist parties while most of the Muslims went over to the Muslim League.

The League, which had for many years existed as a shadow party, the only substantial element in it being its life President, Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, now took full advantage of the reaction against the Congress, caused partly by its new communal tendency but mainly by its project of abolishing the baneful system of *zamindari* (landlordism) on which the Muslim middle-class in some provinces depended for their livelihood. Soon developing into a full-fledged, well-organised political party and backed by the British Government as well as by reactionary elements in the country, the Muslim League fostered the separatist tendency among a large section of Muslims till it grew into the demand for Pakistan, the formation of the Muslim majority provinces into a separate sovereign state. We will show later that this was the political consequence of the cultural separatism which had been at work for a long time and was temporarily overshadowed by the enthusiasm for the movement for national freedom.

In 1939 the Congress Party and its Provincial Governments were faced with the problem of taking an attitude to the Second World War. All Congressmen were unanimous in condemning fascism and sympathising with the democratic cause. But opinion differed over the question of cooperating with the war-effort of the British Government and the conditions for such cooperation. Mahatma Gandhi's view was that the Congress should suspend their political demands, and give its whole-hearted moral support to Britain and her allies, but should take no practical share in the war-effort as it was against the spirit of *ahimasa* or non-violence. Some

thought the Congress should take advantage of this opportunity to press its demands and if they were conceded, should give not merely moral but full practical support to the Allied cause because the Congress had accepted *ahimsa* only as a policy for the internal political struggle, not as a creed which was to be adhered to even in the face of aggression from outside. Most members oscillated between these two points of view.

To put an end to this difficult situation the Congress ministries in all provinces resigned but the party abstained from taking any step which would embarrass the Government or interfere with the war-effort. Later, against the advice of Mahatma Gandhi it offered to cooperate with the British Government provided a provisional National Government was set up immediately and India was promised complete independence after the War. This offer was ignored by the Government and so was the symbolic individual civil resistance renewed by Mahatma Gandhi to protest against the suppression of civil liberties during the War.

Early in 1942 when Japan had occupied Burma and Malaya and was threatening to invade India, the British Government, on the insistent advice of President Roosevelt, sent Sir Stafford Cripps to negotiate with the political parties in India about transferring all departments in the Central Government, except Defence, to Indian Ministers taken from the main political parties. Dominion status was promised after the War. This offer seems to have made an impression on the Congress and the Muslim League but it was opposed by Mahatma Gandhi and ultimately rejected by all.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that the British Government did not think it could defend India against a Japanese invasion, and argued that if the British withdrew the Japanese would desist from invading. Even if they did invade, Indians

fired with the spirit of independence, could resist by refusing to cooperate with them.

He persuaded the Congress to pass a resolution (August 1942) asking the British Government to 'Quit India' and if it refused, to start a nation-wide campaign of Civil Disobedience. Before the Mahatma could see the Viceroy and argue with him, he and all the prominent Congress leaders were arrested and sent to prison. Deprived of the direction of responsible leaders and inflamed by sincere, patriotic but young and imprudent left-wing aspirants to leadership, the country was set afire from one end to the other. The deplorable mob riots were crushed with even more deplorable ruthlessness by the Government and the peace of the graveyard reigned over India.

After the end of the Second World War the British Parliament under the leadership of the Labour Government adopted the large-hearted and statesmanlike policy of making a genuine attempt to find a just and reasonable solution of the Indian problem. A British Cabinet mission consisting of the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Alexander was sent to India to evolve in consultation with the main political parties, an agreed plan for the transfer or power. Very soon it appeared that the only real obstacle in the way of a solution was the demand of the Muslim League for a separate state which had to be reconciled with the Congress' desire for a united free India. The compromise proposal the Cabinet Mission put before Indian leaders was that autonomous groups of the Muslim and Hindu majority provinces should be joined in a loose federation which should immediately be given the status of a British Dominion with the inherent right of cessation. The proposal was well-received at first and a compromise seemed possible. But the separatist tendencies which had been

fostered during the last ten years by the British Government and the vested interests within the country had, through their unceasing campaign of hate, started a continuous series of bloody communal riots and created bitterness and mistrust, which made rational thinking impossible. The negotiations for peace carried on in the midst of violent clashes in several parts of India naturally failed. As matters were heading for a climax which would give the British Government a reasonable excuse to stay on to keep peace, the bitter draught of partition had to be swallowed and it was decided that India be divided into two parts—one under the name of Pakistan, consisting of western Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sind, and eastern Bengal, and the other comprising the rest of the country. The two parts were to be declared free British Dominions on August 14 and 15, 1947, respectively. So the great dream of freedom which India had been dreaming for a long time was at last realised. She escaped from her bondage with her life but not limbs intact as she had to lose two of her organic parts. A constitution was completed and passed by the Constituent Assembly at the end of 1949 and came into fore on January 26, 1950. India became a Sovereign Democratic Republic but has maintained an informal connection with the British through the Commonwealth since then.

II

In this brief survey of the last phase of India's struggle for freedom we saw that relations between the majority community and the biggest minority passed through three phases. The first between 1918 and 1928 was one of almost perfect political unity, the second between 1928 and 1937 of growing tension and the third, dating from the assumption of power

by the Congress in seven provinces, of open hostility between the Muslim League, representing the majority of upper and middle-class Muslims, and the National Congress which they dubbed, without justification, a Hindu organisation.

We have already admitted that the parting of ways between the Muslim League and the Congress was due mainly to the blow which the land policy of the Congress aimed at the vested interest of almost the whole upper and middle-class of Muslims in several important provinces of India. But the fact that the League could carry with it a large section of the poorer classes of Muslims whose economic interests were likely to suffer through its separatist policy, cannot be explained on the basis of this economic theory. Religious prejudice was no doubt present but a comparison with the Muslim countries of the Middle East shows that mere religious prejudice is not sufficient to prevent Muslims from living and working in harmony with non-Muslims.

The disharmony between Hindus and Muslims which resulted in the disastrous division of India was rooted in the cultural separatist tendencies of the reform movements within the Hindu and Muslim communities. These movements had started in the declining period of the Mughal Empire, with the object of lifting the people out of the moral depression which was partly the cause and partly the effect of political chaos. Later they were quickened by the reaction against the type of Western culture which had come to India through commercial adventures. The growing influence of colonial English culture in the second quarter of the nineteenth century alarmed leading Hindus and Muslims. Some of them, specially Muslim divines, rightly thought that in order to reinforce their moral and spiritual power of resistance against the domination of English culture they should look back at the sources of their religious and cultural consciousness and

draw new inspiration and strength from them. In this they succeeded. But this throwing back of the mind into the distant past had the undesirable result that the near past and its fairly valuable heritage, the Hindustani culture loses its significance in their eyes. In course of time, the common culture which had been evolved by the blending of Hindu and Muslim elements in the rising phase of the Mughal Empire was disowned by all but a small section of Hindus and Muslims. We will make a brief survey of these movements of reform and revival which will help us in understanding the present cultural situation in India.

We have seen that when the Muslims came to India their general, cultural and religious life had already considerably deviated from the lines laid down by Islam. This gap gradually increased mainly because of the degeneration of the Muslim divines most of whom had turned into courtiers who intrigued and maneuvered for riches and power and utterly neglected their duty as religious teachers and spiritual guides.

The first attempt to reawaken the religious and moral consciousness of Muslim society was made in the beginning of the seventeenth century by two Muslim divines independent of court influence. Maulana Sheikh Ahmad of Sarhind (1564-1624) tried to divert Muslim mysticism from the monistic way, which often leads to indolence and inactivity as well as heterodox beliefs, towards more orthodox lines. He exhorted the common people and the nobles of the royal court to live a pure austere life in keeping with the Islamic *Shariah*. He showed his independence by defying the court statute which required him to prostrate himself before Emperor Jehangir, though he had to suffer imprisonment. Maulana Shah Abdul Haq of Delhi (1551-1642) brought Indian Muslims nearer to the source of Islamic teaching by popularizing the study of the traditions of the Prophet.

But the greatest contribution to the movement of religious reform among Sunni Muslims was made by Shah Waliullah and his family. Shah Waliullah himself translated the *Quran* into chaste Persian and wrote several books on Quranic studies, thus leading the Muslims back to the fountain-head of Islam. His literary work was continued by his illustrious sons, especially Shah Abdul Aziz, the practical realization of the reforms proposed by the latter being attempted by Shah Abdul Aziz's distinguished disciple, Maulana Syed Ahmad of Bareilly, his son-in-law Maulana Abdul Hai, and his nephew Maulvi Mohammad Ismail. These three militant reformers with the help of an armed force of volunteers wrested western Punjab and the North-West Frontier region from the Sikh Government (1815), with the intention of turning it into a model Islamic state. But differences with the Pathans weakened the hold of the reformers and after a few years they were defeated by the Sikh at Balakot. Maulana Syed Ahmad and Maulvi Mohammad fell on the battlefield and the 'Islamic State' came to an end.

But the purely social and religious reform movement started by Shah Waliullah and his sons had more success. A section of Muslims gave up their superstitious beliefs and luxurious habits and began to live a pure, austere life like Muslims in the early days of Islam.

This puritanical movement was further intensified due to the menace to orthodox religion which the growing influence of Western culture after 1857 brought with it. Bitter hostility to English culture and the Government was fostered in the minds of the younger generation of religious-minded Muslims educated at the seminary of Deobund founded in 1868. Maulana Muhammad Qasim of Nanota and some other divines of Shah Waliullah's school of thought established Deobund's reputation as a centre of learning and liberty.

The sentiment of political freedom which had lived in the minds of the teachers and pupils of Deobund from its very inception was inflamed into a passion by the dynamic personality of Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hasan who was externed by the British Government and kept a political prisoner in Malta for many years. Another distinguished pioneer of the freedom movement was Maulana Shibli. But the vague, though intense political feelings of the Muslim religious class were given a definite shape and direction under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, who brought about an alliance with the National Congress which endured the stormy days of the communal frenzy let loose by the Muslim League and survived its formidable onslaughts.

A few years after the birth of Deobund, another great Muslim reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded Aligarh College for modern Western education. Both institutions aimed at reforming the Muslim community but their concept of reform differed. While Deobund had the vague, undefined idealistic aim of returning to the early days of Islam, Aligarh had the definite, realistic and limited object of adjustment to present material circumstances.

But when we talk of Aligarh and the movement associated with it we must distinguish between Syed Ahmad Khan and the small bland of sincere, selfless reformers associated with him and the large section of upper and higher middle-class Muslims for whom and with whom the reformers had to work. Syed Ahmad Khan himself was a high-minded enlightened reformer and statesman whose aim was wide and high. He wanted to lead the Indian mind out of the obscurantism of the medieval into the 'New Light' of the modern age through Western education and to evolve a new culture by blending the best elements of the Western and Hindustani cultures. In politics, his policy was of conditional

cooperation with the Government which would be consistent with the national self-respect of Indians.

His English School at Ghazipur (1864), Persian School at Moradabad (1869), and the Scientific Society (1863) were founded as institutions for both Hindus and Muslims with the full cooperation of both communities. But during his sojourn at Banaras as a Judicial Officer, he realized that the Hindus as a community were filled with a revivalist passion and were giving up the common Hindustani culture for a purely Hindu culture. Symbolic of this tendency was the movement started in Banaras in 1867 for abolishing Urdu from Government offices and courts and adopting literary Hindi in the Devanagari script. After expostulating in vain with his Hindu friends about this separatist tendency he was convinced that no cooperation in the cultural field was possible between Hindus and Muslims and decided to limit his reformist activities to the Muslim community and to look to the Government for help and protection.

During the wars in the Balkan Peninsula and Tripoli in which Turkey, the seat of the Muslim *Khilafat*, was involved, a wave of anti-British feeling and a bias towards the movement of national freedom was formed in the minds of a considerable number of students of Aligarh College and became steadily stronger in spite of all the measures taken by the authorities of the College to check it.

This was part of the general political awakening which the personal example of Hasarat Mohani, the poetic inspiration of Iqbal and the publicistic stimulus of Maulana Muhammad Ali had produced in the modern educated class of Muslims corresponding to that produced among the religious-minded by Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hasan, Maulana Shibli and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The Government, alarmed at this development, tried to counter it by encouraging a 'loyal

group' of Muslims to set up a political organization under the name of the Muslim League. The struggle between the Loyalist and Nationalist wings of educated Muslims ended in the victory of the latter when the Muslim League under the presidentship of Jinnah, who was an ardent nationalist in those days, came to an understanding with the National Congress in 1916. Later, when the Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi adopted a programme too radical for Jinnah and the Muslim League, Maulana Muhammad Ali rallied nationalist Muslims around his new political organization, the Khilafat Committee (set up to agitate for the restoration of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina to the Turkish *Khilafat*) and founded the educational institution, Jamia Millia, consisting of nationalist students and teachers expelled from Aligarh College. But his greatest achievement was to bring together the orthodox religious group of Deobund and the English educated group of Aligarh under the banner of the Khilafat Committee and, shoulder to shoulder with soldiers of freedom drawn from all communities and classes of Indians.

The union of the orthodox and the modern educated Muslims proved to be fruitful and infused a new spirit in both. The former came in touch with the needs and problems of the times and learnt something of the technique of organisation; the latter developed a certain degree of religious consciousness and established contact with the Muslim masses from whom they had been completely cut off. The Muslims developed a capacity for concerted thought and action as a homogenous well-knit community and took a leading part in the fight for freedom between 1920-22. There now was a possibility that they would turn their attention to the great problem which Muslims throughout the world have to face—the problem of adjusting their religious and cultural life to the needs and conditions of the modern age. But unfortu-

nately the union between the two sections of Muslims did not last long.

The sudden collapse of the *Khilafat* movement due to the decision of the Turks to abolish the very institution of the *Khilafat* on which they had built up their influence over the Muslim community cut the ground from under their feet and had a devastating effect on their morale. The old antipathy between the two sections of Muslims was revived and they became jealous of each other's power. Then there were splits within each section. The orthodox waged an internecine war over the issue of supporting or opposing King Ibni Saud's policy of pulling down mausoleums built over the tombs of holy persons in Hejaz. The modern educated fought among themselves over the relations between the Muslims and the Congress. Those of them who were not really interested in the freedom movement but had agreed to back the Congress in return for its support to the *Khilafat* now found the atmosphere of the congress uncongenial and were wooed and won over by the Loyalist group. These seceders who had received their political training and won their influence over the public in the *Khilafat* and the Congress movements, used the façade provided by the Loyalist group, which joined the Muslim Conference and later the Muslim League, to incite the Muslims against the Congress and break up the united front of Hindus and Muslims against the Government.

It is difficult to say whether the Muslim and the Hindu anti-Congress groups had a hand in the communal riots which broke out simultaneously throughout India or whether they were solely engineered by the police and the secret agents of the Government, but there is no doubt that some political leaders unscrupulously exploited them to strengthen their communalist organisations. They, however, were more successful in dividing Hindus and Muslims than in luring them

into communalist parties. Muslim communalists, particularly appealing to their people in the name of religion, could not make much impression because the great majority of the orthodox religious class and even the religious minded modern educated Muslims were against them as staunch nationalists. The Muslims generally attached more importance to the opinion of the latter in matters of religion. Besides, though the Muslim as well as Hindu illiterate simple-minded masses could be inflamed into bloody riots by any fire-brand fanatic or wily *agent provocateur* they could not be made to harbour hatred or ill-will against each other for any length of time. So during the General Elections of 1937 the great majority of Muslim voters did not vote for the Muslim League but for the Congress in several provinces and for independent candidates and others.

But after the elections when the Congress formed ministries in the provinces, the Nationalist Muslim politicians grumbled that they were given too few offices. More important, however, was the grievance voiced by the generality of Muslims that their cultural rights were being trampled upon by Congress Government. The substantial core in this largely imaginary grievance was as already stated that the majority of the new Congressmen did not believe in the generous policy Mahatma Gandhi had adopted towards the minorities, specially the Muslims. So the general pro-Muslim attitude of the Congress did undergo a substantial though subtle change. The most palpable sign of this was that the solemn declaration of the Congress that Hindustani (the greatest common measure of Urdu and Hindu) in both the Persian and the Devanagari scripts would be made the national language, was not honoured by the Congress Governments in some provinces and Urdu was generally discouraged by them. This caused universal dissatisfaction not only in the upper and middle-classes

but in the lower middle-class of Muslims which formed the majority of the community in many urban areas.

The anti-Congress section of Muslims who had now joined the Muslim League found the cultural issue far more effective in inciting their community against the Congress than the purely religious issue had proved to be. The unscrupulous way in which they exploited it and the gullibility of Muslims, especially in the provinces in which they were in a minority, to their propaganda, has scarcely a parallel in the political history of nations. The Muslims were not only persuaded that the Hindi but also the Hindustani movement (which the Mahatma had started for the special purpose of bringing the best possible cultural understanding between Hindus and Muslims) was designed to undermine Muslim culture. Even the scheme of Basic Education which Mahatma Gandhi had evolved in consultation with the most distinguished Muslim educationists, and which was mainly a technical problem concerning the method of education, was made out to be a menace to the cultural life of the Muslims. The safeguard suggested against these dangers (for Muslims in the minority provinces) was separating from India the provinces in which Muslims were in a majority and, forming them into an independent state under the name of Pakistan. What is utterly perplexing to every normal mind is how the Muslims in the minority provinces, who were to remain in India, could be made to believe that Pakistan would solve their difficulties. Only one hypothesis can offer a possible solution to this puzzle. We have already seen that the unrest among Muslims was more pronounced in the provinces in which the Congress ministries proposed to abolish the *zamindari* system because a very large percentage of Muslims of the upper-middle and even lower-middle classes depended directly or indirectly on *zamindari*. Muslim zamindars (as also their

Hindu brethren) and a large number of other Muslims wanted to overthrow the Congress Governments before they could carry out the dreaded land reforms. So they supported the Muslim League. These Muslims probably neither wanted Pakistan nor believed that it would come into existence, but supported its demand to merely create a deadlock in Indian politics, so that the British might find a pretext to remain in India and protect their vested interests.

However that may be, the Muslim League was remarkably successful in exploiting the cultural issue and in inciting Indian Muslim against the Congress, thus its case for Pakistan was greatly strengthened. Prominent Congress leaders went on saying that the cultural issue was a mere sentimental affair confined to the middle-class and did not interest the Muslim masses. They did not realize that the illiterate masses in India generally and the Muslim mass particularly, blindly followed their middle-class leaders.

After partition, when almost all the Muslim League leaders had left the Muslims in India to their fate and migrated to Pakistan, Muslim leadership passed into the hands of the Nationalist Muslims who had always advocated a united Indian nation. The 'two-nation theory' which nobody had ever heard of before 1937 died a natural death on Indian soil and Muslims became an integral part of the Indian nation. Incontrovertible proof of the fact that the Indian Muslims, like the other minorities and the Hindu majority, had willingly accepted Indian nationhood, was that their representatives in the Constituent Assembly (who had been elected on the basis of separate communal electorates) unanimously supported the new Indian Constitution and so did the Muslim newspapers and public organizations. Moreover, in the first General elections held in independent India (1952) a great majority of the Muslims voted for the Congress and

the rest for other parties loyal to the Indian Constitution.

The question now is, after the Indian Muslims have been to some extent integrated into a common Indian nationhood, what is their attitude to a common national culture? Before answering this question it would be better to briefly survey the present cultural situation of the Muslim community in India.

The position at present is this. The fundamental problem which the Muslims in India, like their co-religionists all over the world, have to face, is adjusting themselves to modern Western culture. So far they have taken a definite attitude to two of its principles. By offering their allegiance to the Indian Constitution they have, with the exception of a small section, dissociated themselves from the idea of the theocratic state, which is still a cause of internal conflict in many Muslim countries, and have accepted the modern Western concept of the secular democratic state. But on the other hand, like other Indian communities and most Asian peoples, while honouring as sacred values patriotism and loyalty to the state, they are unanimous in rejecting what Western nations explicitly believe in—the priority of country or state over religion. For them religion is, as it always was, the highest value.

This rings us to the question of how Indian Muslims stand in relation to the national Indian culture. Here we will answer the question very briefly as the next two chapters deal more fully with it as well as other issues connected with the present situation of the national culture in India.

Inspite of differing from the majority community in institutional religion, the Indian Muslims have much in common with it in fundamental, religious and moral consciousness, social structure, family life and the general way of living, and can easily fit into any rational pattern of national

culture. But they are discouraged and distressed by the feeling that the pattern which is being sought to be evolved and symbolized in a considerable section of Hindus, the attempt to make Hindi the sole national language, is inspired by an exclusive policy which tends to reject the contribution made by Muslims to Indian culture during the last seven and a half centuries.

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As with the Muslims, the reactions both positive and negative of the Hindu community to Western culture were very strong. The first positive reaction was represented by the Adi Brahmo Samaj which, though slightly influenced by Islam and Christianity as well as by Western culture, was essentially a moderate Hindu reform movement. But the new society founded by Keshub Chandra Sen under the name of the Brahmo Samaj of India, which consisted of dissenters from the mother Samaj, was under a stronger influence of Christianity and had the appearance of a separate sect formed after the pattern of Semitic religions. Its programme of social reform also was much more radical. Though this latter movement was not very popular in Hindu society and was weakened by internal quarrels which divided it into two subsects, it rendered valuable service.

Keshub Chandra Sen's influence aroused the spirit of religious and social reform in the educated Hindus of Bombay. They started the Prarthana Samaj, more or less on the lines of the Brahmo Samaj. The leadership of Ranade did not allow the new Samaj to develop into a separate sect but made it into a powerful movement of reform within Hindu society.

Mahadeo Govind Ranade was one of the greatest leaders of modern India. He tried to infuse a new spirit of enlightenment in the Hindus and was much more successful than Syed

Ahmad Khan had been with the Muslims. Ranade's contribution to the social, educational and political awakening of Hindus, not only in the Deccan, but throughout India was very great. In addition to bringing about specific social reforms, he created a general reformative trend among the Hindus through the Prarthana Samaj and the Social Conference. He also stimulated the modern educational movement and the movement for political freedom through the Sarvajanic and Deccan Sabhas. He was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress.

Ranade, like Ram Mohun Roy and other Brahmo Samaj leaders, was the representative of the liberal tendency in Hindus which responded favourably to Western culture and believed in adapting Hinduism to the needs of the modern age by reforming and modifying traditional beliefs and social practices. But the reaction of a very large section of Hindu society to Western culture was on the whole negative. The only aspect of it which appealed to them was the patriotism and nationalism of the Western peoples. They were convinced that traditional Hindu religion and culture were self-sufficient and could meet the needs of every age. What was required was simply reinterpretation; the salvation of India did not lie in following the West but in freeing herself from its political and intellectual domination and forming herself into an independent nation with a national culture free from all foreign influence. To them the nation meant the Hindu community; they regarded Muslims as foreigners more or less like the British.

The most prominent protagonist of this conservative Hinduism was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Ranade's powerful adversary and the leader of the party which opposed his political and social liberalism in the Deccan. Tilak began his public career at the age of twenty four as the editor of the *Maratha*

and the *Kesari.* Working in cooperation with a band of enthusiastic young men he won rapid success and took a prominent part in founding the Deccan Education Society and Fergusson College (1882).

Tilak's literary activities were directed towards bringing Hindus in living contact with their glorious past. He was a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and two of his books written in English, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* and *Orion,* and his Marathi commentary on the *Bhagwad Gita, Gita-Rahasya,* had a deep influence on the minds of a large section of educated Hindus and gave Hindu nationalism a decidedly religious and slightly revivalist bias.

The Arya Samaj movement pursued a more pronounced revivalist policy; it attempted to carry Hinduism back to the pristine simplicity of the Vedic Age by discarding its Vedantic and Puranic elements and all influences of the Muslim and Western cultures.

The mystical cult of theosophy represented by Annie Besant did not find much response in the Hindu community, but Mrs Besant's personal services to Hinduism as the founder of the Central Hindu College (now Banaras Hindu University) and to the Indian freedom movement as the sponsor of the Home Rule League were of considerable value.

These reform movements were truly the product of the resurgence of speculative activity and a dynamic impulse in the Hindu mind and had an indirect bearing on its religious sentiment. Religious awakening in the true sense of the word, which has for its source a purely religious experience, a direct and immediate perception of the Ultimate Reality, was brought about by Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and his follower Swami Vivekananda. Since his childhood Ramakrishna had a compelling urge to seek the truth through the time-honoured way of ascetic self-discipline and self-purification.

His all-embracing faith led him not only to try the different disciplines of the Hindu mystical orders with experiences of being blessed with the visions of Kaḷi, Sita and Krishna, but also to go through the devotional practices of Islam and Christianity. These afforded him the supreme experience of finding himself in the living presence of the Prophet Mohammed and Jesus Christ. He devoted the last seven years of his life to initiating the disciples who had gathered round him into the mysteries of mystical ecstasy. The foremost of his disciples was Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda was only twenty-three when his master died. During his pilgrimage of five years through the length and breadth of India, what touched him to the heart was the ignorance and grinding poverty of his countrymen. After visiting the holy temple at Kanya Kumari, he stood on a rock on the shore of the Indian Ocean and made a solemn vow to dedicate his life to the education, and material and spiritual uplift of the poverty-stricken millions of India. Shortly after, he participated in the Conference of World Religions at Chicago and finding a good response to his message of faith and love, made a lecture-tour of the United States, held seminars for teaching the Vedanta philosophy, wrote a book *Rajyga*, and started a Vedanta Society in New York. During his stay abroad he also visited Switzerland, Germany and England, winning many disciples in London.

On his return to India Swami Vivekananda was given a rousing reception. He made another tour of the country, this time exhorting the Hindu community to do the work of social service and reform, specially the education and uplift of women in the organized, Western way. In 1897 he founded the Ramakrishna Mission to serve as a model for such organizations. In 1899 he built the *math* (monastery) at Bellur for the sadhus of his order and set up the Advaita Ashrama at

Almora. After another tour of the USA he returned to India and continued to work for his mission of love and service, till his health broke down. He retired to the *math* at Bellur, teaching Vedanta philosophy to his disciples till his death in 1902.

A different interpretation of Vedanta philosophy based on intellectual inquire quickened by inner experience, was given by Shri Aurobindo Ghosh. Born at Calcutta in 1872, he had his education from the age of seven to twenty-one in England. After his return to India he passed thirteen years in the service of Baroda State, during which he learnt Sanskrit and made a thorough study of Hindu religion and culture. During the Bengal agitation in 1906 he left the State and led the Nationalist movement in Calcutta. It was mainly at his instance that the Nationalist party adopted the swadeshi and the non-cooperation programmes which were later taken up by the National Congress. A profound religious experience at this time changed the whole course of his life. He had a vision of Shri Krishna who charged him with carrying to the Hindu community the message that it should rise to serve the Sanatana Dharma and through it the whole world. But Sri Aurobindo was convinced that the Hindus could succeed in liberating their country of spiritual development. In order to meditate on the nature spiritual development and its technique he retired to an ashrama at Pondicherry (then in French territory) where he lived till his death. For seven years he issued a journal, *The Arya*, in which his autobiography, the Life Divine, appeared serially. It was later published as a book in three volumes. His commentary on the *Bhagwad Gita* had been published earlier.

Sri Aurobindo has exercised a deep influence on educated Hindus. His philosophical speculations are too difficult for most laymen, but all revere and love his almost legendary personality.

In this brief review of the new religious and intellectual movements in Hindu society we see two opposite tendencies at work: (a) a liberal movement which expressed itself as eclecticism in religion, modernism in social outlook and moderatism in politics and (b) a conservative movement. The latter took two different forms: One advocating a return to Vedic religion and social life and the other making Vedanta philosophy the basis of religious life, reconciling it with Puranic Hinduism and changing the structure of Hindu society without changing its spirit. In politics all conservatives agreed in opposing foreign domination and supporting Hindu nationalism. The struggle between the liberals and the conservatives ended in the victory of the latter. The liberals continued as a small group, exercised considerable influence on the intellectual life of the country, but lost their hold over the National Congress and were practically excluded from public life. This was good in so far as the conservatives quickened the movement for political freedom. But the conservatives' conception of nationhood, though more dynamic, was narrower than the liberal as it did not go beyond the Hindu community.

But fortunately India had three great leaders—a poet, a philosopher, and a moral teacher—who broadened the limits of Hinduism till it was co-existensive with the universal human family and created in Hindus the wider national outlook which persuaded them to try to build one Indian nation in cooperation with Muslims and other minorities.

The poet, Tagore, made his point of view patent in Greater India. He emphasized that India's history was not made by Hindus alone. Centuries ago Muslims arrived with their cultural heritage and became part of her history. Then the British came with the cultural treasures of the West. New India was not the monopoly of any one creed or race. Here

different religions and cultures have to live a harmonious life of peace and love. To create that atmosphere and develop this harmony and love is the greatest problem for India today. Tagore himself did his best to solve this problem. His international university, Vishwa Bharati, which he founded at Shantiniketan was meant to provide an atmosphere of universal brotherhood in which the Indian youth was to be nurtured by bringing together the best representatives of the Eastern and Western cultures.

The philosopher, Radhakrishnan, was the greatest representative of 'Hindu Nationalism' if the word nationalism is used in an elevated sense. He reinterpreted the great religious and cultural movements of Hinduism, from the Vedic to the Neo-Vedantic, as the various links of a single chain of evolution, and its doctrine, ritual and social institutions as the logical consequences of one central idea. He made Hindus conscious of their mission to keep moral and spiritual values alive in this egoistic and materialistic age, thus providing them with a lofty and inspiring ideal. But at the same time he exhorted them to give up the idea of reviving the past and reconcile themselves with the present. While emphasizing the need of maintaining a vital link with history he warned against the vain attempt to reverse the course of history. The ideal he placed before them was to deduce from an intelligent study of the national traditions their enduring norms and values, and to make them the basis for building a new life, using new forces to meet new needs and circumstances.

But to translate the idea of the poet and the philosopher into action, to realize words in deeds, to widen the movement of high-caste 'Hindu Nationalism' into that of Indian nationhood embracing all castes and creeds was the task which the moral teacher, the greatest after Buddha, was destined to perform. Mahatma Gandhi's political activity was only an

off-shoot of his larger mission—the spiritual and moral regeneration of humanity. He strove for the freedom of India because only a free India could achieve his great moral idea and through her example persuade other nations to follow her.

He began by putting this great ideal—the realization of truth through non-violence—before his own Hindu community because he believed it to be an expression of the Hindu philosophy of life. His spiritual experience had revealed to him Absolute Reality in the form of truth. So the pursuit of truth was to him the ultimate moral value. This could be realized in every field of life—political, social or economic—by achieving good ends through means which are equally good and pure. The greatest obstacle in the way to truth is uncontrolled passion of every kind, which Mahatma Gandhi expresses by the general term 'violence'. So the votary of truth has to cultivate 'non-violence' in thought, word and deed.

The Mahatma's personal example, much more than his teachings, infused a new spirit in many Hindus of all classes—a spirit of self-discipline and self-sacrifice, of tolerance and love—and prepared them for the peaceful struggle for freedom and progress.

But Mahatma Gandhi did not confine his message of truth and non-violence or his call to fight for the freedom of the country to Hindus alone. He was large-hearted enough to regard all the minorities, including Muslims, just as much his own people as were the Hindus, and far-sighted enough to see that India could not win and maintain her freedom without incorporating the biggest and most dynamic minority, the Muslims, into the national organism. So he made one of the main tasks of his life the welding of 'Muslim Nationalism' and 'Hindu Nationalism' into the common Indian nationhood.

He began by trying to create a cultural accord between the two communities as the basis of political unity. He knew that in the history of India, cultural harmony above all meant religious harmony. His study of the *Quran* convinced him that the essential religious spirit of Islam, though not quite the same as that of Hinduism, was very akin to it. In his prayer-meetings which were attended mainly by Hindus he included in the liturgy two *Surahs* from the *Quran*, as also some verses of the Bible. This was symbolic of his attitude to Muslims and produced at least for some years a harmonious atmosphere similar to that which had once been produced by the great leaders of the Bhakti movement or by Kabir and Guru Nanak. Though the subsequent acrimonious quarrels between the Muslim League and the Congress destroyed this harmony, the fact that it had once been established in our time shows that pure religion free from any political alloy does not increase the distance between Hindus and Muslims but brings them closer.

The keystone of the cultural policy adopted by Mahatma Gandhi, and under his influence by the National Congress, was Hindustani as the national language of India. His intimate contact with the people all over India during his frequent tours had shown him that Hindustani was the mother tongue of over 10,000,000 people in the midlands of India and was understood by many more in other regions. So he moved the Congress to declare it the national language in both the Persian and Devanagari scripts, used for Urdu and Hindi respectively. The bitter opposition to this policy by many Hindus, and strangely enough by most Muslims, whom it was specially designed to satisfy, was mainly responsible for disturbing the atmosphere of communal amity which Mahatma Gandhi had created with the cooperation of nationalist Muslims, and for starting an internecine strife.

On account of this fatal fight Mahatma Gandhi's success in his great object, though phenomenal, was not complete. He did free India, within the short period of thirty years, from the domination of a power which was at the beginning of that period, the greatest on earth. He did weld many Muslims and most Hindus into one nation. But he had to pay the price of losing about one-fourth of the area and one-fifth of the population of India, which was formed into the independent state of Pakistan.

In the atmosphere of anti-Muslim feeling which prevailed as a natural reaction to the division of India and the bloody riots which followed it, Mahatma Gandhi's conciliatory policy towards the Muslims lost many Hindu supporters and after the Mahatma's death the Constituent Assembly with a large number of Congress votes declared Hindi in the Devanagari script the national language of India, though with a proviso that efforts be made to keep Hindi as close as possible to the language of common parlance, i.e. Hindustani.

After the language clause had been incorporated into the Constitution, all who had been opposed to it including the Muslims, submitted to it as the best as they could. But the passionate propagators of Hindi have created great discontent, not only among Muslims but also among speakers of other regional languages, by failing to adopt an accommodating policy. Similarly, linguistic minorities in the areas of regional languages are dissatisfied with the attitude in the respective majorities. We shall discuss the language question more fully in the next chapter and try to show how the unnecessary tension which it is causing among the different cultural groups can be eased.

Here we have to point out that another front of cultural tension (perhaps with more potential danger than the linguistic one) is where the liberal and conservative elements

are facing each other. In addition to the Jana Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Ramrajya Parishad which carry on the conservative traditions of Hindu nationalism, there is within the ranks of the National Congress itself, the orthodox Gandhian group which has strong differences on some important questions with the liberal group. The differences among old comrades do not give any positive cause for alarm at present as they are kept in check by mutual respect and love, but unless they are reconciled, the work of building up a harmonious national culture as a bastion of national unity will not proceed with the necessary speed and in the right spirit.

Chapter XIV



Prospects of Cultural Unity: The Present Situation

If we look at the cultural situation in India we find that though the old pattern of unity in diversity has preserved itself, the ground-colour of unity has grown dimmer and the superficial colours of diversity become more pronounced. Unless we soon exert ourselves to restore, perhaps with added emphasis on the common ground, the balance of the original design, this delicate balance may be lost for ever.

Now let us take stock of all forces, favourable and unfavourable, to the growth of cultural unity, which are at work and see what we can do to reinforce the former and check the latter.

Beginning with the unfavourable factors, the most prominent obstacle to cultural unity is the variety of languages. When told that there are fourteen regional languages and many more dialects belonging to four different linguistic families in India, foreigners are inclined to think that Indians are not one people but, like the inhabitants of Europe, a motley group of peoples with different cultures showing some common elements. But as we have seen, though the variety of languages in India is as great as in Europe and that of dress, food and the general mode of living is even greater, the community of spiritual and moral ideas and social institutions has

given India an inner unity unknown to Europe. Still, there can be no doubt that on account of linguistic barriers, people from different parts of India generally meet as comparative strangers on all levels other than the religious one. Unless he happens to know English or Hindi, a man from the non-Hindi-speaking regions finds it extremely difficult to make himself understood outside his own linguistic area. No doubt if he spends some time in a new place, he can pick up enough of the local language to get along but in spite of a common background of religious beliefs and thought in general, he cannot come in intimate contact with the people around him because there is no common medium for the exchange of deeper thoughts. So until there is a link language and it is known throughout the country, an effective cultural unity is not possible.

But mere variety of languages could not be a positive danger to the unity of India if it were not accompanied by linguistic communalism amounting in many cases to chauvinism. It is this poison in our social organism that makes the movement for linguistic states, which is perfectly justified on rational, historical and practical grounds, an object of great concern to all who have the good of the country at heart.

To avoid any misunderstanding we should make it clear what we understand by the term 'linguistic communalism'. The consciousness of a group of people speaking the same language that makes them form a distinct community is natural and legitimate. But if it is associated with the feeling that those sons of the country living in the same area or an adjacent area who speak a different language are outsiders in the worst sense of the term and should be treated as such, then it assumes the ugly shape of linguistic communalism which is harmful to national unity and is highly objectionable. Far

more harmful and objectionable, however, is the tendency in a linguistic majority to withhold from the minority the safeguards guaranteed by the Constitution for preserving and promoting its language and culture, including the primary education of its children through the medium of the mother tongue, or to discriminate against individual members of the minority in state services and other matters. It is this chauvinism, unfortunately present in India, which has created a painful situation: after states were reorganised on a linguistic basis, the cultural and other rights of linguistic minorities in each state have been disregarded in many cases. So when the question of redefining the boundaries of linguistic states comes up for consideration, one finds the worst tensions and conflicts in the border areas where each of two or more language-groups agitates for the inclusion of the area of its domicile in the state where its own mother tongue would be the official language. If groups living in each border area could be assured that to whichever state the area went they would all receive equal treatment and their constitutional rights would be safeguarded, a major difficulty besetting the problem of linguistic states would be removed.

But fortunately there is a favourable factor which leads us to hope that the disastrous consequences of linguistic communalism will not reach the extreme limit and cause the political disintegration of the country; the conflicting groups and regions have by and large full confidence in the Government at the Centre and are prepared to accept its guidance in resolving cultural as well as other conflicts. This is a great asset which, if used with firmness combined with tact, can ensure rational linguistic policies designed to promote cultural harmony within each state and in the country as a whole.

Another powerful factor working for ultimate cultural unity in India is the community of political ideas which has

developed within the last sixty or seventy years. Whatever harm British rule has done to India is compensated by one great blessing which the contact with a free democratic people brought her—a systematic schooling in the theory and practice of modern democracy and the enlightened liberal outlook which it produced was confined to a small circle of intellectuals, the practical training in the rough and ready methods of representative government which the Indian people gradually received at all levels since Lord Ripon introduced local self-government, gave a great majority of Indians a uniformity of political outlook which is rare in Eastern, and not very common in Western countries.

Other influences of modern Western culture also provide a common element in the thought and life of the educated class in India and serve as a valuable unifying force. The English language has been the common medium of communication on the higher intellectual level, between people from different parts of India, and it is likely to retain that position for some time, till Hindi has found nationwide currency and has made enough progress to be able to express scientific ideas clearly and precisely. Moreover, the modern educated class, influenced by the growing freedom movement in the country about the end of the last century, changed from its original slavish imitation of colonial civilisation to a more discriminating assimilation of the best elements of genuine English culture. It is now seeking to make the Western scientific attitude of mind, the liberal outlook on life, and the proper appreciation of economic factors, an organic part of its mental make-up.

This new tendency towards a healthy modernism, if properly adjusted to our national life, can serve as a meeting-ground for all culture groups and prove of great help in evolving a harmonious national culture. For our political and economic

progress, this assimilation of the fundamental principles of the modern Western culture is even more important; only on the basis of those principles can the social, democratic, secular state and the planned industrial economy which we have chosen for ourselves be securely founded.

The last, though by no means the least favourable factor for cultural unity is the fact that Hinduism constitutes for the great majority of the people a community of spiritual, moral and social ideas and institutions, which will become more pronounced when a common national language has pulled down the barriers of linguistic difference. Then the problem of a common national culture will be reduced to the comparatively simple question of a cultural understanding between Hinduism and the religious minorities. That the small minorities like the Sikhs, the Christians and the Parsis have already adjusted themselves to Hinduism or will easily do so, will be admitted by all. It is only in the case of the largest minority, the more than 60,000,000 Indian Muslims who form between ten and eleven per cent of the total population, that many people are inclined to doubt they can fit into the general pattern of cultural life which is likely to develop in India. The argument that the Muslims, having once coalesced with the Hindus in a common Hindustani culture can do so again, would not satisfy the sceptics; the whole case of the Muslim League for partition was based on the claim that the Muslims had an entirely different culture from the Hindus and, therefore, are, or should be made a separate nation. So it is necessary for us to examine the basic cultural positions of the Hindus and Muslims today and see how far they can be brought into harmony.

As far as the concrete elements of the Hindu and Muslim cultures are concerned, they can be easily observed and described. But the intangible subjective and objective mental

elements which determine the informing spirit of each are hard to specify specially now when both are passing through a period of transition and inner conflict. This is a poet's task whose mind is the mirror of his age and whose voice the voice of his people. Fortunately we have had two such poets in our time, Tagore among the Hindus and Iqbal among the Muslims. None could understand better the spirit of the present-day Hindu culture than Tagore and that of the Indian Muslims than Iqbal; it was mainly under their inspiration that the new cultural consciousness in their respective communities had come into being.

The intuitive apprehension of unity in diversity is, as we have already said, one of the fundamental characteristics of the Indian mind. This consciousness of the manifold phenomena converging on a central point which gives them reality and life is essentially the religious experience. So the distinctive feature of the Indian character can be called religiousness. In fact, in the Indian configuration of moral values, the religious value is the common centre of the various concentric circles representing other values. Even today, when the stream of religious consciousness has in the minds of the orthodox turned into a stagnant pool and in the modern educated into a shallow brook, the religious impulse is so strong that neither can think of a philosophy of life which is not based on religion.

As we have seen, all the new intellectual and cultural novements among the Hindus were inspired by religious motives and their leaders assigned to religion the same position in their system of life as the sun occupies in the solar system. Among them the most liberal and the greatest opponent of orthodoxy was Tagore. He had opened all the windows of his mind to the new brilliant light from the modern Western world which reveals the secrets of nature, its tremendous

forces, the laws which control these forces and the art of using them for promoting the material welfare of man. But this Faustian ideal did not satisfy him as it failed to show him the way to establish a living and intimate contact with the reality behind the world of phenomena for which his Indian soul yearned. So he had to turn to the ancient *Upanishads* which had been guiding seekers after truth for the last 2500 years. Speaking of the relation between the artist and the world of nature, Tagore gives us a glimpse of this *Weltanschauung*:

The world asks: "Friend, have you seen me? Do you love me?—not as one who provides you with foods and fruits, not as one whose laws you have found out, but as one who is personal, individual?" The artist replies: "Yes, I have seen you, I have loved and known you—not that I have any need of you, not that I have taken you and used your laws for my own purposes of power. I know the forces that act and drive and lead to power but it is not that. I see you where you are what I am."[1]

It is this realisation of the Absolute, sweeping away the distinction between 'I' and 'Thou' which is the central idea in the religious philosophy of the Hindus and which is to them the ultimate moral value.

Now as far as the Muslims are concerned, the orthodox section, of course, regards religion as the pivot of all cultural life. But even among the modern educated class no thinker of any significance has conceived of a basis for culture other than a religion. The most distinguished representative of modern religious thinking was Iqbal. He was not a religious man but a philosopher and poet. As one who had his higher education in England and Germany he was even more open

1. Tagore, Personality, p.22, quoted by Radhakrishnan is *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, Macmillan, pp. 130-1.

to the influence of Western thought than Tagore, and his approach to cultural problems was more scientific and critical. But he came to the same conclusion as Tagore about the significance of religion:

> Religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought nor mere feeling or mere action. Thus in the evaluation of religion philosophy must recognise the central position of religion and has no other alternative but to admit it as something focal in the process of reflective analysis.[1]

For Iqbal as for Tagore, the essential nature of religion is the relation of man to Ultimate Reality. According to him: "The main purpose of the *Quran* is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe.[2]

This means that the fundamental religious experience of Hindus and Muslims before being subjected to intellectual analysis by them is as nearly identical today as it was in the minds of Hindu Bhaktas and Muslim Sufis during the Middle Ages.

But the subtle, fleeting spiritual experience common to the Hindu and Muslim mind, when interpreted in intellectual terms by these two philosopher-poets, yields concepts of the Ultimate Reality which are different. Tagore may appear to the superficial observer to conceive of the Ultimate Reality solely as a personal God (as the great protagonists of Bhakti like Madhavacharya Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya, etc., had done) but he is deeply influenced by the latest tendency of the Hindu mind to regard the concept of God in Bhakti and

1. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 2.
2. Iqbal, *ibid.*, p. 8.

that of the Brahman in Vedanta as two aspects of the same reality. While generally he refers to God as the Beloved for whom the human soul yearns, he also speaks of Him as beyond comprehension and free from name or form.

In one place Tagore says: "But there where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word."[1]

Similarly the relationship between man and God has two aspects in Tagore's philosophy. In the face of a personal God the human soul is conscious of its independent existence but in relation to the Absolute it regards itself as non-existent, apart from the one Ultimate Reality. He says: "In love, at one of its poles you will find the personal, at the other the impersonal. At one end you have the positive assertion—Here I am; at the other end the equally strong denial—I am not. Without this ego what is love? And again only with this ego how can love be possible?"[2]

This duality in the conception of God as well as in the relation between God and man, is explained by Dr. Radhakrishnan in this way: When man tries to apprehend Absolute Reality through his limited intellectual faculties he cannot go beyond the conception of a personal God whom he regards as a being separate from himself. But when he rises above the intellectual level to that of religious intuition, he is conscious of the perfect identity of God, man and the universe.

Now the concept of Ultimate Reality in Iqbal's philosophy is really a confluence of two streams of thought: (a) the Shahudi school of the Muslim Sufis who derived their ideas

1. *Gitanjali*, p. 67 quoted by Radhakrishnan, *op.cit*, p. 47.
2. *Sadhana*, pp.114-15, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *ibid.*, p. 53.

from the *Quran*, and (b) the modern European philosophies of Nietzsche and Bergson. Iqbal has tried to blend these into a harmonious whole. He regards Ultimate Reality as a 'Personality' in the higher sense of the words "Our criticism of experience reveals the Ultimate Reality to be a rationally directed life which in view of our experience of life cannot be conceived except as an organic whole, a something closely knit together and possessing a central point of reference. This being the character of life, the ultimate life can only be conceived as an ego."[1]

But Iqbal warns against any analogy between the Absolute Being and human individuality. "The Ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life. To interpret this life as an ego is not to fashion God after the image of man. It is only to accept the simple fact of experience that life is not a formless fluid, but an organising principle of unity, synthetic activity which holds together and focalises the dispersing dispositions of the living organism for a constructive purpose."[2]

This gives us some idea of the difference in the interpretations given by Tagore and Iqbal of the fundamental religious experience. Tagore's God is essentially the Brahman of Vedanta; the concept of a personal God which gives life and zest to his poetry is for him an inferior conception of reality to which the limited intellect of man is generally confined. On the other hand, for Iqbal the true concept of God is that of the unity of personality. Idealistic monism, very similar to that of the Vedanta, in which many Sufis believed, is regarded by Iqbal as 'the stage of the heart', an intermediate subjective stage, in the search for truth. So both Tagore and Iqbal accept the theistic as well as monistic concept. The difference

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1. Iqbal, *op.ci.t*, p. 74.
2. Iqbal, *ibid.*, p. 58.

lies in their estimate of the comparative value of these concepts.

But before proceeding with the comparison of the fundamental philosophical ideas of Iqbal and Tagore, we have to emphasise that the difference between the religious and cultural consciousness of Hindus and Muslims, which their philosophies represent, exists only on the level of pure intellect. In the actual religious life of both Hindus and Muslims which is determined by direct emotional experience, idealistic monism and theism are regarded of equal value and used indiscriminately as motives for inducing the devotional state of mind which most people consider the essence of religion. The Hindu chants or listens to *slokas* from the Vedic scriptures or the Gita speaking of the Absolute Reality 'without name or form' with as much depth of feeling as to rhapsodies of love and devotion to a personal God, *Ishwar* or one of his incarnations. Similarly, the Muslim offers prayers to Allah or sings hymns in His praise in the same spirit of submission and ecstatic devotion in which he recites the verses of the Sufi poets identifying the deity with the universal spirit which manifests itself in the world of creation, including man. Most of the Hindu *bhajans* (devotional songs) can be turned into Muslim *haqqani* chants (hymns in praise of God) by simply substituting the name of Allah for that of the Hindu deity, or vice versa. What is more, it is common to see Hindus and Muslims attending each other's popular religious musical assemblies, the *quwwali* and the *bhajan mandli*, and being moved to devotional favour in spite of the fact that their methods of formal devotion and the systems of ritual are quite different.

The real divergence between the religious philosophy of Tagore and Iqbal is seen in their conceptions of the human personality and the relation between man and God. Tagore

regards the personality of the individual as real from the relative, human point of view but unreal from that of absolute truth. Whatever shade of reality the finite, individual mind has, is reflected from the Infinite. Its destiny is to merge itself in the Infinite. With every step it takes towards its destiny, it gains in reality but loses in individuality. The final surrender of the self is the height of bliss. "Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself."[1]

Iqbal, on the other hand, regards the finite personality of the individual as real as the Infinite Being of the Absolute. By drawing closer to the Infinite the finite human being does not lose his individuality. On the contrary his individuality becomes more complete, more pronounced. He solves the logical difficulty which arises in thinking of the individual mind retaining its finiteness after joining the Infinite in this way: "This difficulty is based on a misunderstanding of the true nature of the Infinite. True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity; and the moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite ego must be distinct though not isolated from the Infinite"[2]

The idea of the universe in Tagore's philosophy is taken bodily from Vedanta. According to him the physical world is a phenomenon of the Absolute and as such as merely a relative existence. The finite human mind regards it as it regards itself, to be an independent reality. But this is an illusion, *maya*. Self and non-self, man and the physical world, are two aspects of the same Absolute Reality; one is active, the other

1. Tagore, *Sadhana*, p. 152, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.72
2. Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p. 118.

passive. The physical world is the field in which the self exercises its spiritual force. This force expresses itself not in a struggle but in an intimate relation with the physical world. "When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then he is emancipated, for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born, then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the All is established."[1]

Iqbal's conception of the universe like that of Absolute Reality is derived partly from the *Quran* and partly from modern vitalistic philosophy. For Iqbal the world of nature has reality, not as something opposed to God but as 'the habit of God'. It is not 'a mass of pure materiality occupying a void. It is a structure of events, a systematic mode of behaviour, and as such organic to the Ultimate Self. Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self."[2]

The finite human mind, however, regards the physical world as opposed to it and tries to overcome it. Its knowledge of the world is not passive but dynamic. It is a kind of "insight' which is beyond the range of perception. This insight is the ego's appreciation of the temporal, spatial, and causal relation of things—the choice that is to say of data, in a complex whole, in view of the goal or purpose which the ego has set before itself for the time being. It is this sense of striving in the sense of purposive action and the success which I actually achieve in reaching my 'ends' that convince me of my efficiency as a personal cause.

That is why Iqbal uses the term 'subjugation' for man's perception of nature and regards this 'subjugation' as a means of consolidating his individuality.

1. Tagore, *Sadhana*, p. 8, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p. 19.
2. Iqbal, *op.cit.*, pp. 53-4.

In Tagore and Iqbal's ideas about God, man and the world, are reflected their philosophies of life. For Tagore, as we have seen, human life's ideal is one which has been dominating the Hindu mind since the days of the Upanishads: "Lifting the veil of ignorance which shows individual men as well as the physical world as separate entities and realising the supreme truth that there is only one entity—that of the Absolute." "In the topical thought of India it is held that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from *avidya*, from ignorance. It is not in destroying anything that is positive and real, for that cannot be possible, but that which is negative, which obstructs our vision of truth. When this obstruction which is ignorance, is removed, then only is the eyelid drawn up which is no loss to the eye."[1] Then only he realises the Absolute Truth.

This great object cannot be achieved through the senses and reason but only through the irrational faculty called intuition. So in training the mind it is necessary to keep the intellectual faculties in check and to awaken mystical consciousness by ascetic self-discipline. This religious ideal determines the moral ideal of human life. Realisation of the supreme truth of unitism arouses in us the feeling that all men are manifestations of the same reality. So we regard others as one with us and devote ourselves to loving and serving them. This is the root of all virtue. Conversely differentiating between men, regarding ourselves as separate from others and entertaining personal desires is the root of all vice. "It is our desires that limit the scope of our self-realisation, hinder our extension of consciousness, and give rise to sin, which is the innermost barrier that keeps us apart from our God, setting up disunion and the arrogance of exclusiveness. For sin

1. Tagore, *Sadhana*, p.72, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp. 112-13.

is not one mere action, but it is an attitude of life which takes for granted that our goal is limited, that our self is the ultimate truth, and that we are not essentially one but exist each for his own, separate individual existence."[1]

It is the function of poetry to free man from vicious personal desire. "We (poets) set men free from their desires."[2] The artist himself can get rid of desire only when he gives up the illusion of his existence as separate individuality and eliminates the distinction between self and not-self, when he can say to the universe, "I see you where you are what I am."[3]

It is the bliss of this vision of reality which is the soul of art and poetry. "The rhetoricians in old India had no hesitation in saying that enjoyment is the soul of literature—the enjoyment which is disinterested."[4]

Now if we turn to Iqbal's philosophy of life, we feel as if we had been transported from the sphere of being to that of becoming, from the world of repose to that of strife. In his own way Tagore too has laid great emphasis on action, but his dynamism is an extraneous factor not an organic part of his basic philosophy. In Iqbal's *Lebensanschauung* action and struggle form the keystone of the whole structure. For him the ideal of human life is not to merge one's self into the non-self but the assertion and consolidation of the self. He conceives of God as the Absolute Self, the archetype of individuality. Man has to try as best he can, to fashion himself according to the Divine model by the expansion and consolidation of his personality. This makes it necessary for him to creatively apprehend the world round him, that is to know the forces of nature and the laws of their action and to use

1. Tagore, *ibid.*, p. 111, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p. 94.
2. Tagore, *The Cycle of spring*, p. 18, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *ibid.*, p. 121.
3. Tagore, *Personality*, p. 22, quoted by Radhakrishnan, *ibid.*, p. 131.
4. Tagore, *ibid*, p. 8, quoted by Radhakrishnan, p. 126.

them for his purpose. "Endowed with the power to imagine a better world, and to mould what is into what ought to be, the ego in him aspires in the interest of an increasingly unique and comprehensive individuality, to exploit all the various environments on which he may be called upon to operate during the course of an endless career."[1]

In the apprehension of reality the struggle for the conquest of nature is of greater help than the ascetic self-discipline of the Sufi. Emphasising the importance of the struggle with nature for the development of human personality, Iqbal says: "The intellectual effort to overcome the obstruction offered by it besides enriching and amplifying our life, sharpens our insight, and thus prepares us for a more masterful insertion into subtler aspects of human experience."[2]

A deeper knowledge of the universe not only has intellectual but also great spiritual value. "In our observation of nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship."[3] But Iqbal does not follow Nietzsche in regarding human personality as above good and evil or free from the authority of social laws. According to Iqbal, the right development of personality is possible only by conforming to the Divine Law in a society organised on the basis of liberty, fraternity and equality. Like Tagore, Iqbal also values the idea of the unity of mankind as the basis of moral life but he does not derive this idea from the unity of Absolute Reality but from that of creation. All men are one, not because they are moments in the one Absolute Existence but because they have been created by the same creator, have been endowed with the same nature and made to conform to the same law of life. The

1. Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p. 73.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

development of individual personality, within the bounds of this law to the point where man is initiated into the mystery of reality, controls the forces of nature, shares in eternal life and deserves the title of 'the Vice-Regent of God on earth' is the ideal of morality as well as of art.

Iqbal agrees with Tagore that the object of all art is the intuitive apprehension of reality. But his concept of the functions of art turns out to be very different from that of Tagore. According to Iqbal, art, far from trying to eliminate the distinction between self and non-self, should further emphasise this distinction, that is, it should consolidate and perfect the individuality of man and thus make him immortal. It should never induce repose, mellowness, acquiescence but a creative restlessness, a dynamic vivacity, a prophetic zeal. "What art aims at is the eternal flame of life, not these few moments of breathing like sparks... Be it the poet's chant or the minstrel's melody; what makes the flowers melancholy is no morning breeze. Fallen nations do not rise without a miracle. True art strikes its way through the Nile like the miraculous wand of Moses."[1]

Thus we have a glimpse of *Weltanschauung*, of the modern educated Hindu and Muslim classes as reflected in the philosophies of Tagore and Iqbal. We find that in the depths of the Indian mind, two streams of religious consciousness spring from the same source and flow in the same channel, so that no real differentiation is possible between them. It is only on coming to the surface on the level of analytical thought that they divide into two distinct streams taking different courses, known under the name of the Hindu and Muslim religions. But presently we shall see that they meet again in the wider expanse of social, moral and aesthetic life.

1. Iqbal, *ibid.*

Looking at the concrete aspects of the cultural life of Hindus and Muslims, we find that in spite of the separatist movements of the last 200 years, most of the common factors which had been partly the cause and partly the effect of the cultural synthesis which took place at the time of Akbar are still there, and new common ground has been created by the influences of the modern Western culture.

Though the moral ideas of Hindus and Muslims are based on different philosophical outlooks, yet partly owing to the basic similarity of their religious experiences and partly to common physical and economic circumstances their practical moral codes are very alike. We shall give only two illustrations. Next to love and devotion to God, human affection is regarded as the highest virtue by both Hindus and Muslims. Altruism, social service, generosity, kindness to one's relatives, hospitality—in short, all qualities which are covered by the Christian term 'charity'—are valued by both, much more than the four cardinal virtues of the Greeks. What is more remarkable, both show exactly the same tendency to carry these amiable virtues to an extreme, where they degenerate to vices. Altruism, service, and hospitality often expose good men to unscrupulous exploitation by wastrels or rogues. Generosity has not only created professional beggars but many other varieties of parasites; kindness to relatives is very apt to take the form of nepotism. *Muruwwat*, an Arabic word meaning 'chivalry' was once used to denote the general kindliness of the Indian character. Now its meaning has significantly changed to something like spineless benevolence.

Another set of virtues to which Hindus and Muslims in India attach much greater value than perhaps any other people, are temperance, modesty and chastity. The most obvious difference between their common moral code and that of the Western people is that while Westerners regard crimes against

property as much more serious than sexual lapses, Indian Muslims and Hindus generally take a much more serious view of an act of incontinence than of theft.

Even more striking is the uniformity of social, specially family life, of the Hindus and Muslims. One would have expected that the Muslims, whose religion does not recognise any form of social distinction, would have no social hierarchy, but we find that they have actually developed something like a caste system by dividing themselves into racial and hereditary vocational groups. No doubt, there is some difference in the relations which the Muslim social groups have with one another and those which the Hindu castes or sub-castes have among themselves, but it is a difference of degree, not of kind. For instance, though even orthodox Muslims belonging to different social groups freely dine together, which their Hindu counterparts would not dream of doing, they generally do not intermarry.

The family life of both communities shows exactly the same pattern. Their family is not like that of the Western people, a small unit consisting of a married couple and their children, but a much bigger one including even distant relations, with a common home and often a joint purse.

Though the Hindu *Dharmasastra* insists on joint family property and the Muslim Shariah wants a legacy to be divided among the wife and children of the deceased, in practice such divisions are not common. In any case the average Hindu or Muslim family has a common budget controlled by the father or the eldest earning member of the family. Often the whole family, even if very large, lives on the earnings of one person who slaves himself to death. The members of the family not only share one another's weal and woe but assume the right of interfering in every affair, public or private.

Obedience to one's elders, especially one's parents, is

the sacred duty of every Hindu and Muslim. Equally binding on a wife is obedience to her husband. The position of women in Muslim and Hindu families is more or less the same. Though Islam has given more rights to women, they are in practice regarded as inferior to men in Muslim and Hindu families alike, excepting a few, especially enlightened ones. In Muslim society, the seclusion of women is much more strict and their education much less attended to; many of them are either ignorant of the rights which the personal law of Islam has given them (honoured by the Indian Republic as it was by British Government) or are so helpless that they cannot fight for them. During the past decade, however, there has been a marked change in the situation. One can see distinct signs among Hindu, and to a lesser extent Muslim educated women of a consciousness of their human dignity, and rights and some concerted effort to achieve their rightful place in society.

The food, dress and general way of living of both communities is, barring minor differences, the same. There are variations but these are regional not communal. Where the influence of the Hindustani culture still persists, especially in northern India, the rites and ceremonies connected with birth, marriage, and death observed by Hindus and Muslims are very similar.

But the most powerful force which binds Hindus and Muslims in a community of the deepest feeling is today, as it was during the Mughal period, that of fine arts. Though their philosophical concepts of art (as Tagore and Iqbal have told us) are different, the unity of their aesthetic experience, gushing forth from the depths of their hearts, washes away all intellectual differences. As soon as they enter the realm of art, all sons of Mother India—Hindus, Muslims and others—feel that the common stream of their life flows with the same

rhythm, is agitated by the same storms, and soothed by the same calm. Even people from different regions who do not know a word of one another's language, understand the common language of the heart which uses tones and colours instead of words. In every branch of art, Hindu and Muslim artists show a spirit of real brotherhood, which is the brightest sign of hope for the cultural unity of India.

When to all these common factors in the cultural life of Muslims and Hindus we have added the unifying forces of modern Western influences—the English language, democratic ideas and institutions, a general liberal outlook, a scientific attitude of mind and proper appreciation of economic factors—we are faced with a formidable array of facts which must lead to the conclusion that the Muslim minority can easily fit into the pattern of a national Indian culture, provided this culture allows for a healthy diversity.

But unfortunately the language policy of some Indian states supported by a considerable body of Hindu opinion, gave Muslims reason to fear that the majority community did envisage a uniformity of culture with would not leave much room for the free development of their cultural idiosyncrasies. The mental frustration resultant from the suicidal separatist policy of the 1937-47 decade combined with the economic distress caused by the abolition of zamindari and the curtailment of their share in the state services, has filled the majority of the Muslim middle-class with resentment, making them hypersensitive to any interference with the cultural rights guaranteed them by the Constitution. We shall discuss their specific grievances in the next chapter. But it would not be superfluous to say a word about the general problem of the Indian Muslims because very few non-Muslims realise that such a problem exists, much less that it is urgent and demands a speedy solution. The Muslim middle-

classes had, at least in northern India, depended mainly on zamindari or jagirdari and state services for their livelihood, throughout the seven and a half centuries since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, to the present day. Now they have lost their zamindari rights and are gradually losing much of their share in the state services (which was originally out of all proportion to their percentage of the total population). Most of them are faced with the prospect of starvation because the avenues of employment are already overcrowded. It has to be admitted that the measures taken by he state though justified, have hit the Muslims hard and the fact remains that a whole class of people is in a hopeless plight. It is true that the problem of unemployment is not confined to middle-class Muslims, but their case is much more acute than of any other single group and requires special attention. It must be conceded that the Government has tried its best to remedy the legitimate economic as well as cultural grievances of the Muslims as well as of other minorities. Unfortunately its policy has not yet made as much impact as it should have, owing partly to its tardy implementation but mainly to the irresponsible attitude of communalist Muslim leadership.

The bearing of this on the theme we are discussing is that the feeling in the most important minority, incidentally in a state of mental and economic stress, is that its cultural rights are not respected. This feeling is fraught with danger for the cultural unity and progress of the country, and all reasonable efforts should be made to remove it. But we must make it clear that the danger to which we referred is not that dissatisfied Indian Muslims would resort to political intrigue with Pakistan; they are neither in the mood nor the position to do so. There is a greater possibility of some of them becoming the tools of subversive forces inside the country. But the real and very serious danger is that the Muslims, who

have made a valuable contribution to Indian culture and prosperity in the past and are capable of doing so in the future, may fall a prey to despondency and despair, indolence and inactivity and become a dead weight, hampering the progress of the country. It must be remembered that the Muslims make up a very large percentage of the sons of the soil, belong to the oldest Indian stock and the small percentage who came later, between the eighth and sixteenth centuries, have now been completely Indianised, so that the community as a whole is an organic part of Indian society and responded to the call of Islam because it touched some innermost chord in the Indian soul. If the Indian Muslims are down and out, it would mean that a vital part of the Indian organism, which supplies some essential ingredients necessary for harmonious development, will be paralysed, with disastrous results for the whole.

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To sum up the foregoing discussion. There is a great deal of actual cultural unity among the various linguistic and religious communities in India, including the Indian Muslims and the potential for building a new national culture is high. But this national culture has to aim, not at absolute uniformity, but at a perfect harmony of a variety of regional and sectional cultures. Further it has to be broad-based and to blend into a harmonious whole the bet elements in our cultural heritage of the Vedic Hindu, Buddhist, Puranic Hindu and Mughal Hindustani cultures, as well as the best of what we have received and can receive from modern Western culture.

Chapter XV



Towards a New National Culture

1– The Language Problem

Though independence brought a final solution of the vital political problem, the cultural tangle, far from being resolved, seemed to become worse. As an immediate effect of freedom, the influence of Western culture and of the English language showed signs of decline and the veneer of uniformity which these two elements had given to the cultural life of the country began to wear off, revealing the full diversity of regional cultures. The question of the official and national language, particularly, gave rise to grave differences. It seemed that our national unity instead of growing stronger was in danger of becoming weaker.

The rising of the language controversy, immediately after independence, was full of peril but it could not be avoided. The adoption of a democratic constitution made a change in the official language inevitable. As long as power was in the hands of a few Englishmen who did not require the consent of the common people, English could be the official language. But as soon as real representative government was set up, it was clear that it was necessary to keep close contact with the people and enjoy their confidence and this could only be done by speaking to them in their own language. The obvi-

ous implication was that English had to be replaced as the language of official administration by each regional language in its own area. But at the same time a common link language was needed which could be used in place of English, for the official business of the Union, for correspondence between the Union and the states and between one state and another.

Before independence, the Indian National Congress, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, had recognised Hindustani as the national language, with the obvious implication that it would be the language of the Central Government in free India. But when the time came for drawing up the Constitution circumstance had changed. After a sharp and long controversy, it was decided by a marginal majority of one vote that Hindi in the Devanagari script was to be the official language of the Union. Each state was given the power to adopt any language or languages for its official business.

Objections against Hindi being made the official language were based on three factors: (1) the advocates of Hindustani held that Sanskritised, literary Hindi was far removed from the spoken language even in Hindi-speaking regions, and the number of those who understood it was comparatively small; (2) those who did not speak Hindi, specially those who spoke the south Indian languages, protested that if Hindi took the place of English as the official language at an early date, they would not be able to compete with Hindi-speaking people for the Central and All-India Services; (3) people with a Western education generally argued that neither Hindi nor any other regional language would, for a long time to come, be able to serve as the vehicle of official business specially to express precisely the higher concepts of law and jurisprudence.

In view of these objections adequate safeguards were provided in the Constitution. To make Hindi as widely comprehensible as possible a clear directive was given that it should be so developed as to assimilate simple and commonly understood words, forms and styles from Hindustani and the other Indian languages. To avoid the dangers of an early change-over from English to Hindi, it was provided that English would remain the official language of the Union until 1965, and if necessary its use would continue after that date. As for the language of law, that is the language of the Supreme Court, the High Courts and the Bills and acts of Parliament, it was decided that English would continue indefinitely until it was changed by an Act of Parliament.

As a further precaution, provision was made in the Constitution to the effect that, before the new linguistic policy was put into force two Presidential Commissions would be appointed, each after an interval of five years, to elicit public opinion about the various aspects of this policy, to consider it and then recommend to the resident how this policy was to be implemented without harming either the legitimate interests of any section or the larger interest of the country. The first of these Commissions was appointed in 1954 and submitted its report in 1956. It generally endorsed the provisions made in the Constitution about the official language of the Union and the state governments and made useful suggestions about implementing them.

It is difficult to say that all the linguistic problems will find an early and easy solution. Still, during the last two decades, especially since the publication of the Language Commission's Report there is in the country, with the exception of one or two states, more clear and constructive thinking. Linguistic fanaticism is subsiding and the people appear inclined to solve their language problems in a spirit of

understanding and compromise. If in accordance with the recommendations of the Language Commission, all the major Indian languages recognised by the constitution are allowed to flourish within their own spheres, with English given an important place as an international cultural and scientific language and a modified form of Hindi accepted as the common link language, the work of building a new national culture will become easier. With the cementing force of a new link language, provided it keeps as close as possible to spoken Hindustani, we will be able to build a new national culture out of the remnants of common Hindustani culture and the best elements of the vast material furnished by the various regional languages.

2–The Problems of a New Cultural Synthesis

A synthesis of the regional or group cultures into a common national culture has already been achieved thrice in the history of India–first by the fusion of the Aryan Dravidian, then of the Hindu and Buddhist and lastly of the Hindu and Muslim cultures. Today we are faced with the same problem. But this time it is more complex and has several new aspects.

Before we can think of a rational solution we must get rid of the futile mentality which urges some of us to try to revive the cultural life which prevailed during the Vedic or Puranic ages. For this implies the exclusion of all elements which have come from outside, specially those of the Muslim culture; these have been so completely assimilated in the intellectual, aesthetic and social life of India that they have, as it were, entered the stream of the life-blood running through the veins of Indian culture. The attempt to separate these ingredients and get them out of the system through a process of blood-letting will never succeed. It will only enervate our

culture and cause it to suffer from pernicious anemia.

The first thing. Then, that we have to realise is that the dominating complexion of the present common culture is that of the north Indian culture. That is why its influence over the south is very limited. To be truly national it has to assimilate the best elements of the various regional cultures specially those of south India. This requires a maximum cultural contact. Several important steps have already been taken in this direction. The Union Ministry of Education started a Youth Festival in the late fifties which was held every year at the beginning of winter. It was an occasion for university student from all parts of the country to live together for a few days and give one another glimpses into the cultural life of their respective regions–their music, dance, drama, painting and sculpture, etc. Earlier three academies were set up, one for the promotion of the representational arts, another for music, dance and drama and a third for literature. But these academies which bring together their members and Fellows only for a few days in the year cannot provide the continuous and permanent contact among the representatives of group-cultures which is required for the process of fusion of the multifarious cultural elements into the lasting amalgam of a national culture. If they are to serve as cultural laboratories of the Gupta and Mughal periods, they should be turned into institutes where the Fellows are in permanent residence and receive liberal pensions so that, free from all financial worries they can devote themselves whole-heartedly to evolving common national patterns of art and literature, which give outward expression to that inner spirit of unity, animating the various peoples of the vast land called India. A welcome step taken in this direction during the last few years is that the National Book Trust has been arranging short-term Writers' Camps attended by writers of the various

regional languages and publishing under its "Aadan Pradan" programme some selected books from each language into all the others.

Another course which could be adopted to pull down the barriers separating the various linguistic groups and to awaken and foster the spirit of cultural unity among them, is the large-scale exchange of teachers. Under an exchange system, selected teacher from each linguistic region who knows several Indian languages could be induced by liberal terms to offer their services in different linguistic areas for sufficiently long periods so that they can enter into the spirit of the regional cultures and recognise in them local variants of the common culture of India. These teachers will prove, like the Fellows of the National Academies, to be the makers as well as the messengers of a national culture.

The second aspect of the cultural synthesis which we are aiming at , is that we, of our own free will, have to accept though with discrimination, cultural influences from the West which previously had been forced on us by the political and economic pressure of British rule. As long as we had the feeling that Western culture was imposed by foreign rulers and was instrument for enslaving and exploiting us we could never like it and some of us were its bitter opponents. But after independence we have to take an unprejudiced, objective view of modern Western civilisation and see what it has to offer which is of real use and value to us.

If we review the trend of development in India during the last thirty years we will find that all the three fundamental objectives which we have before us in the reconstruction of our country–a secular democratic state, a socialist pattern of society and industrial progress–are based on ideas which have come from the West. It is true that in trying to realise these ideals we do not want to blindly follow the West but go

our own way, adjusting Western ideas to our changing needs and circumstances. Still, we have to make a close study of the social and political institutions in Europe, America and the socialist world and learn many things from them. We must specially look up to these industrially advanced counties for the material resources and technical aid we require for building up a modern industrial society. So we can say that in shaping our spiritual, moral and cultural life in the narrow sense of the term, we depend largely on our own heritage but in the reconstruction of our political and economic life we are to a great extent relying for help and guidance on West, and are quite justified in doing so.

But we should make it clear to ourselves that if we want to succeed in our plans for industrialisation, we must, to some extent, revise our scale of moral values. No nation which despises economic value as gross materialism, can make the persistent effort and immense sacrifice necessary for industrial progress. If we respect human life, the material resources required to keep men alive are also worthy of our respect. If we think it is our sacred duty to rescue millions of our fellow countrymen from the pain and humiliation of poverty, we should regard as equally sacred the production of wealth required for this purpose. Surrounding oneself with luxuries may be materialism in the worst sense but trying to provide one's fellowmen with the minimum necessities of life to enable them to live with dignity, self-respect and comfort is not materialism but the way to the greater heights of spiritualism.

Another requisite for industrial progress is that we should give up our superstitious and obscurantist outlook on life and study modern science not only to satisfy our thirst for knowledge but also to alleviate the pangs of hunger gnawing at the vitals of the millions in Asia and Africa.

Similarity for building a secular democratic state and socialist society we not only have to borrow many political and economic institutions form the West and the socialist countries and adapt these to our conditions but also to take lessons form them in religious and intellectual tolerance and in fostering the sprit of individual liberty, making independent attempts to temper liberty with social justice. We should have no hesitation in drawing as freely on the ideas and practices of the peoples of other countries in working our Constitution as we did in making it.

But if our new national culture is to be built on a broad and strong foundation we have to perform another act of cultural synthesis–harmonising the upper and middle-class culture which is mainly confined to the urban areas, with the rural culture of the mass of the people. Though it is true that a higher and richer form of culture is found in the cities, to roots which give it life and strength lie deep in the rural soil. Therefore, in the development of a healthy and vigorous culture it is essential that there is close contact between urban and rural life and both are constantly influenced by each other. In India this interaction is all the more necessary because during the last 150 years the larger cities have accumulated a variety of cultural elements from the East and West but seem to lack the leaven which can permeate and transform them into a harmonious whole. This leaven can be provided by the fundamental cultural values which still exist in the simple life in the village under layer of poverty and ignorance.

Formerly small town used to serve as places of cultural exchange between the cities and villages. But now owing to economic changes specially the abolition of zamindari, these town are dwindling into villages and the contact of the urban and rural cultures is very slight. The real check to this danger can only come through a wise industrial policy which

instead of concentrating industries in a few big cities disperses them over the countryside and helps to develop villages into industrial towns of moderate size. Meanwhile the policy which our Government is pursuing of encouraging folk art and culture and introducing to urban areas in various ways, specially through the radio and T.V., is useful as far as it goes. But it is necessary to supplement this with carrying urban art and culture should be given a place in our rural development projects. Artists from the cities should go to the villages and impart elegance of form and refinement of taste which are the flowers of culture and imbibe from the villages the simple faith in life and love of man which are its very roots.

But a synthesis of the cultural values of the city and the village, or of the upper and middle-classes and the masses in a broad national culture is not possible unless we get rid of the narrow aristocratic and individual concepts of art and culture which dominate our minds. The aristocratic view developed during the feudal age was that culture was the expressions of the special values of the higher classes of society. It was their creation and they alone could enjoy it. As for the individualistic concept of culture, it was based on the theory that culture was the efflorescence of the creative impulses of man and flourished in an atmosphere where these impulses could express themselves without any restriction. It was this theory that gave birth to non-conformism in religion, to capitalism in economic life and to a variety of exotic and unintelligible styles in art. We need not discuss these ideas in detail here. It is enough to say that if we believe in a democratic socialist society, we cannot possibly accept the aristocratic and individualistic concepts of culture. To regard culture as the privilege of any particular class is against the spirit of democracy and to permit the individual to give free expression to his idiosyncrasies, even when they are harmful

to society, is the negation of socialism. In a society based on a proper balance of freedom and equality, culture should be regarded as a harmonious expression of universal human values common to all men, high or low, rich or poor, and should be within the reach of all. Similarly the individual should be given a large measure of freedom to use his talents for the creation of art and culture but at the same time should be discouraged from producing what is against the larger interests of society. This will not hinder but help the creation of true art.

But this does not mean that the state should exercise undue pressure on the artist to keep art and culture subservient to the interests of society. It should confine itself only to preventing the productions of art and culture from infringing the civil or common law. Going beyond this and giving the state the right to interfere in the culture life of the people and to determine its objectives or the course it should follow, would be strangling freedom and without freedom it is impossible for art and culture to flourish. In a democratic society the function of directing and controlling art and culture can only be entrusted to public opinion. The welfare state which we are striving to create in India should regard it as its duty to encourage art and culture by giving financial aid to cultural institutions and individual artists but should not make this an instrument of restricting their freedom of thought and action or exploiting them for its purpose. However, some measure of state control on cultural life is necessary. The state must have the power of making laws for preserving the cultural wealth of country from damage or destruction. For instance, there should be laws to prevent rare books or works of art from going out of the country, to punish those who damage historical buildings or other objects of archaeological interest, to ban obscene, disruptive or subversive books,

pictures or films, etc. It is difficult to draw clear lines for the limitation of such controls. But it can broadly be said that they should not be exercised in the interest of the ruling or any one party, community or class but only in the public interest or to safeguard public morals.

To sum up what has been said so far; the cycle of history has again brought us to the point where centrifugal forces are at work and there is a danger that the country might face cultural disintegration, leading first to political anarchy and them to foreign domination. We have to solve this problem as it has been solved before, that is, by preserving regional and group cultures but along with them building a new national culture which will integrate our emotions and aspirations, thereby ensuring the unity and freedom of the country. The best way to achieve this is to give up our nations of revivalism and make what is left of our common Hindustani culture the foundation of the national culture, building upon it freely, borrowing form the rural and urban cultures of the various regions and from Western culture. This cultural synthesis should start with a national language, for language is the soul of culture.

Unity in diversity has always been the distinguishing feature of Indian culture. We should keep it as our aim in our efforts to build the new national culture. If we succeed we will not only solve our own problem but through our example might help in the solution of the most important problem the world is confronted with today, i.e. achieving the unity of mankind in the diversity of nations.

As far as social life is concerned, independence has no doubt solved some of our pressing problems but it has also given rise to some new problems. The main difference between the trends of social change before and after independence is this; formerly advocates of social reform tries,

in keeping with their liberal point of view, to remedy social evils by reforming the individual without changing the general structure of society. But even the semblance of liberal democracy before independence, made necessary some change in the traditional social system. Now that free India has decided to build a socialist pattern for its industrial society a fundamental change is imperative. No doubt this will create many difficulties. But instead of making a vain attempt to resist change we should face the difficult problems squarely and seek their solution.

The urgent need for social reforms like the emancipation of women, the abolition of untouchability and the liberalization of the laws of marriage and inheritance was realised by some enlightened Indian leaders as early as the beginning of the last century. The efforts progressive religious and social movements led by the Brahmo Samaj, the Parathana Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Sarvajanik Sabha and the Servants of India Society were directed towards these reforms. After the First World War, Mahatma Gandhi started 'constructive programme' of which social reforms, especially the abolition of untouchability, was an essential creed. He gave to the untouchables the dignified title of 'Harijans' and tried to secure for them social and religious rights equal to those of caste Hindus, along with special economic and political safeguards. As a result of all these movements ideas of social reform had pervaded a large section of society and begun to make an impact on the life of the people. The pressure of educated public opinion even forced the British Government, which as a matter of political expediency was inclined to side with the orthodox section, to enforce some social reforms by taking legislative measures such as those preventing child marriage and giving Harijans the right of entry into temples.

As we said before, the sprit which animated the movements of social reform before independence was one of respect for human liberty and dignity. The advocates of reform wanted every individual, irrespective of sex, caste or class, to be given full opportunity for self-development and self-expression. They generally believed that this could be done without a fundamental change in the social structure. For instance, they thought that it was not necessary or desirable to abolish the caste or joint family systems on which the fabric of Hindu society rested. Their purpose could be achieved by merely relaxing some of the restrictions imposed by these systems. But the fact was that hemmed in by caste on one hand, and the joint family on the other, the individual did not get enough liberty or opportunity for self-development and self-expression. So some daring reformers challenged the caste system and carried on a campaign to put an end to it. As for the institution of the joint family, there was no organised movement to oppose it but signs of dissatisfaction could be seen and cases of open revolt were not rare.

The advent of independence naturally gave an impetus to social reform and the combined efforts of the Government and private agencies accelerated its progress. As far as legal provisions are concerned, our Constitution gave equal rights to men and women, Harijans and caste Hindus and our Parliament has enacted several liberal and progressive laws regarding marriage and inheritance. But so far practice has lingered far behind the law. The Government, no doubt, does all it can to enforce these laws. Special concessions are given to Harijans in education as well as in employment. Women are given office and honours according to their merit. The courts of law do them full justice in cases relating to marriage and inheritance. But in society old prejudices persist and inequality and injustice prevail as before. To root them

out is not in the power of governments and courts but requires the reforming zeal and missionary efforts of private individuals and institutions. In social, as in cultural life, reform and progress can only be made through the willing cooperation of the state and the people and care must be taken to define and delimit their spheres of action.

As a general principle we can say that social reform should be effected in three stages:

1. First individual advocates and institutions of social reform should prepare public opinion for the desired change.
2. When people a whole agree and opposition is confined to die-hards or vested interest, the government should adopt legislative measures to bring about the change.
3. Then the same agencies which initiated the reform should help the government in publicising the provisions of the new laws and in enforcing them.

Private agencies and individuals, therefore, have to shoulder a far greater burden than the state in the work of social reform. Theirs is a two-fold task in the critical period through which the country is passing. They have to see that the measures of social reform which have won the support of public opinion and secured the sanction of law are carried out as soon as possible, and have also to prepare the people for the basic change in the structure of society.

As we said in the beginning, the circumstances which are leading us towards this change are the direct result of our political freedom. Here we will refer to two of them; firstly the fundamental human rights guaranteed by our Constitution are producing, at least among the educated, a consciousness of individual freedom and responsibility. Secondly, as is always the case in the initial stages of industrial progress, the cost of living is rising without a corresponding

rise in the income of the majority of the people. These two factors have combined to force every adult, man and woman, and in some cases even children, to leave the sheltered life of the family and work for their living in offices, shops or factories. Consequently, the large joint family units are breaking up into smaller ones consisting of husband, wife and children. Moreover, the number of men and women who marry very late in life or do not marry at all, is increasing. At the same time people are migrating from the villages into towns. These changes give rise to fresh problems. For instance, the social and moral difficulties face by lonely, defenceless working girls in towns, the problem of old men and women who have nobody to look after them, the shortage of housing, the rising number of slums and their adverse effects on the health and morality of the people. Social reforms can react to these changes in one of these three ways: they can either offer outright opposition to industrial progress, or struggle in spite of such progress to preserve the old social structure and prevent the changes from leading to these problems or while accepting industrialisation and the consequent social changes, try to solve the problems created by them.

There are in our country strong opponents of industrial progress. They are the people who think that material comfort is an obstacle to spiritual salvation and advocate an ascetic or at least an austere way of life. As the whole purpose of industrial progress is to produce the maximum means for material comfort, their opposition to industrialisation is understandable. But strangely enough most of our reformers regard industrial progress is to produce the maximum means for material comfort, their opposition to industrialisation is understandable. But strangely enough most of our reformers regard industrial progress as the only way of removing poverty and disease and a necessary step to raising the moral and

spiritual level of society. Yet they hope to prevent any fundamental change in the social system and avoid the dangers to which we have refereed. The history of all industrial counties shows that 'industrialisation' made a change in the social structure inevitable and all efforts to avoid it were in vain. So the only rational and constructive approach seems to be that if we aspire to be an industrially advanced society, we must be prepared for tremendous changes and the problems arising from them. Other countries have faced these problems and succeeded in solving them by prudent planning, social legislation and movement of social welfare and reform. There is no reason why we cannot profit by their example and adopt measures suitable to our conditions and avoid the undesirable social consequences of industrial progress.

But in order to have a democratic society with a common culture and common ideals, we have to infuse in our education a spirit of democracy and organise it as an integrated whole. The first of these objectives demands that all boys and girls, without distinction of class or caste should be educated under a system of free and compulsory primary education and all talented children should have an equal opportunity for higher education. The second objective implies that the gulf between general and vocational, as well as between secular and religious education should be bridged, at least at the primary stage, and a common, pattern of integrated fundamental education be provided for all children.

As far as the first objective is concerned our Constitution laid down that free and compulsory education be provided for all children between the ages of six and fourteen, within ten years of the coming into force of the Constitution, i.e. by 1960. But though the Union Government and some states have done a great deal for the expansion of education at all level we are still far from realising the

objective of eight years' compulsory education for all,. As far as the equality of opportunity to pursue higher education is concerned, the position is still more unsatisfactory. Obviously children from poor families can only go beyond the primary stage with the help of stipends form the government. But the Government has done little so far except for giving a number of scholarships to the children of Harijans and other backward classes and especially intelligent children of the weaker sections of society. No doubt enormous financial resources are required for providing free primary education to the whole age-group six to fourteen and at the same time giving all deserving and talented children stipends for studying in high schools and universities. No government can hope to find such vast sums unless it is helped by local bodies and the general public. But we must remember that until we give every child the best education which is available, our talk about a democratic socialist society will have no meaning. Yet it seems too much to hope that in future development plans education will be given much more attention that it has so far.

As far as the problem of integrated education is concerned, very little though was given to it immediately after independence. Mahatma Gandhi alone had the vision to see that the division of education at the earliest stage into intellectual, spiritual and vocational and the existence of separate institutions for these three types of education had led to the defective and one-sided development of our children. It did not help them to grow into integrated people or enable them to rise to their full stature. He laid, therefore, the greatest stress on the harmonious development of 'hand, head and heart' at the primary stage of education. The following will give some idea of what he meant by education:

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come

through a proper exercise and training of bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, ears, nose etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provided the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean the education of the heart. A proper and all-around development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another.[1]

To give practical shape to his concept of education Gandhiji sought the help of educational experts. He asked them to draw up scheme of basic education according to the principle that all knowledge, skills and activities which were regarded to be necessary for the education of the child should centre round some useful craft and the whole process should be permeated with the spirit of a social and moral philosophy based on truth and non-violence. The Government of India also accepted with some reservations the scheme of basic education and wanted all primary education to be gradually remodeled on this pattern. At the end of 1956, schools of the basic type were education over 1.1 million children.

But the acceptance of the scheme of Basic Education by the Government of India and some state governments was only half-hearted and was never tries in the spirit in which it was conceived. So it was naturally found to be unworkable and given up. Recently educational experts of the

1. *Harijan*, 8 May 1937, p. 104.

Government of India have given deep thought to bringing the educational system in line with other systems based on the latest concepts on education. Let us wait and see how far they succeed with the scanty resources at their disposal.

When all is said and done, the real problem of Indian nationhood and national culture is that India is the home of one of the oldest peoples, and is at the same time one of the younger nations in the modern sense of the word 'nation'. As a people, Indians have a set pattern of life firmly anchored in time-honoured traditions; as a nation they are exposed to the flux and flurry, the storm and stress of the modern stage. They do not want to lose their mooring and be swept away by what looks to them the ruthless and aimless, swelling and raging tide of the present but they feel that after choosing the lot of a free democratic state, they cannot remain struck in the pacific but stagnant backwaters of the past. So they have to strike a balance between the static and the dynamic, the old and the new.

This is the real issue which has to be faced in the ultimate analysis. But before this problem, can be properly tackled, the more urgent one of harmonising the diversity of group-cultures with the fundamental unity of a common national culture has to be solved. In the foregoing pages a humble contribution towards solving the problem has been made by starting it as clearly as possible, by stressing its importance and by offering a few practical suggestions. But the actual solution requires the combined efforts of all intellectual and political leaders whose duty and privilege is to guide the destiny of India at this critical juncture in her history. If we succeed in convincing them that the cultural problem facing India is no less important than the political and the economic, our task will have been accomplished.

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This book is a learned exposition of the theory that amidst the great diversity in every walk of life in India there exists an underlying unity. To elucidate his thesis the author has made a chronological survey of Indian history and the movements that have shaped the country. He has concluded by enumerating the various fissiparous tendencies present today, but still sees hope in the future.

Abid Husain (1896–1978) was Professor of Philosophy and Literature at Jamia Millia, New Delhi, during 1926–56 and then Professor Emeritus, Jamia Millia. He wrote over forty books including *Indian Nationalism and Indian Culture* (3 volumes), *The Way of Gandhi and Nehru*, *The Destiny of Indian Muslims*, besides various translations from English and German. The original edition of this book in Urdu received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956 and in 1957 Dr. Husain was awarded the Padma Bhushan.



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